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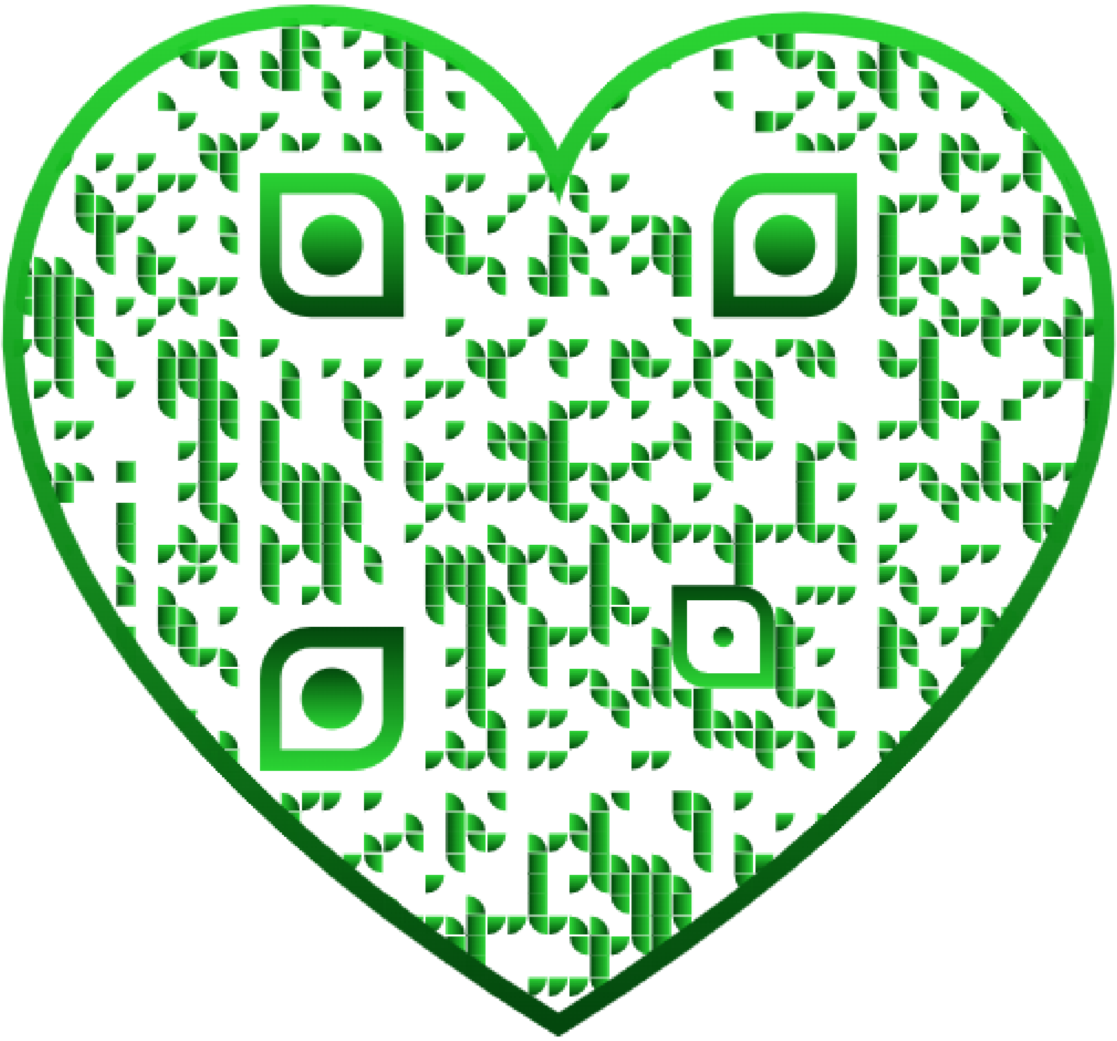

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COMMENT

AS BIG FIRMS SPREAD BETS, SMALL FIRMS CAN BENEFIT

Electrification is proving a more uneven path for the car industry than many expected and firms once committed to going full EV have recognised a need to maintain flexibility. Take Volvo: once the most ambitious legacy car giant in the speed with which it planned to go full EV, it's now extending the life of its combustion models, such as the XC90, which we road test this week (p30).

Adding flexibility is smart but it risks stretching resources. For car giants, that's a challenge, but for small-scale makers such as Caterham, still building up long out-of-production Ford engines for use in its cars, it's a near-insurmountable problem.

Yet the hedging of major manufacturers could actually come to the rescue of smaller firms. To help manage costs into the future, Renault and (Volvo owner) Geely divested and merged their ICE developments into a new company called Horse. It helps spread costs and Horse is free to find other customers for its powertrains – such as Caterham (p42).

As a result, Caterham has a supply of new, cleaner powertrains, Horse has fresh impetus to further refine its proven technology, and Renault and Geely have the flexibility to invest in twin technology streams. Meanwhile, car buyers can both enjoy an XC90 for longer and continue to dream of buying that Seven. Flexibility really can benefit everyone.

James Attwood, associate editor
james.attwood@haymarket.com

Meanwhile, online...

autocar.co.uk

Autocar Awards winners

Matt Prior celebrates three award-winning stars: the McLaren Artura, the Lamborghini Revuelto and the Porsche 911 S/T.

Meet Julian Thomson

The man who designed the Lotus Elise and now heads up General Motors' advanced design centre in Europe talks to Cropley and Prior.

Pick-up tries to charge EV

Ford Ranger PHEV's Pro Power system is set up for powering electrical tools. But Murray Scullion thought he could do one better.

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GETTY IMAGES

GT XX PREVIEWS MOST POWERFUL AMG YET

Sleek electric concept to make production as three-motor GT 4-Door Coupé successor with 0-62mph in under 2.5sec and 850kW charging

Mercedes-AMG has previewed its future electric flagship with the Concept GT XX, a 1341bhp technical tour de force showcasing a radical design, an advanced new technical layout and a motorsport-inspired cockpit.

This fully operational four-door machine features a new 1341bhp tri-motor electric drivetrain and an oil-cooled 114kWh cell-to-pack battery capable of charging at up to 850kW.

As with the Mercedes-Benz Vision EQXX, the precursor to the third-generation CLA that was unveiled in 2022, the GT XX serves as a technology demonstrator for what will become the heavily anticipated successor to the GT 4-Door Coupé and the most powerful AMG yet.

Given its billing, AMG plans to undertake various record attempts with the prototype ahead of a planned launch next year. Mercedes' chief technical officer, Markus Schäfer, said the upcoming production model will target a 0-62mph time of less than 2.5sec and a potential top speed of 224mph.

"With the EQXX, we pushed limits on efficiency, range and charging – and it led directly to the new CLA," added Schäfer. "With the GT XX, the aim is to do the same on the performance side: test the edge, then bring that innovation into production."

> **"The aim is to test the edge, then bring that innovation to production"**

DESIGN

The GT XX is the first model built on the new AMG.EA electric car platform. Its battery pack is integrated into the chassis to boost torsional rigidity and crash protection. The body is constructed from a mix of aluminium, steel and carbonfibre composites.

It also introduces a completely new look for AMG. While at first previewing the upcoming successor to the GT 4-Door

FACTFILE
Engine Three electric motors
Power 1341bhp
Torque na
0-62mph Less than 2.5sec
Top speed 224mph
Battery 114kWh
Range More than 300 miles
Charging speed 850kW

OFFICIAL PICTURES

The GT XX has a drag coefficient of just 0.19. Note lack of rear window

Coupé, it also shows what is to come in the performance arm's electric future. It includes elements first seen on the Vision AMG of 2022, such as the long bonnet, cab-back profile and tapering rear end.

"Some might see it as a sports car, others as a grand tourer," said Schäfer. "It merges both worlds. But the most important thing is it must evoke desire."

Its most striking design element can be found up front, where AMG's Panamericana grille has been reshaped into a more concave, oval form with 10 vertical strakes. This is flanked by recessed headlights and a deep splitter. Elsewhere, the bonnet features functional vents to extract heat, the windscreen is steeply raked for improved aerodynamics and the roof receives a defined central channel. Along the flanks, frameless doors with flush handles and compact aero mirrors reduce drag, while the side sills are sculpted for airflow management.

At the back, notably, the concept is missing a rear window. Below, six small round tail-lights are joined by a 730-LED light panel that can display an array of messages. An airbrake spoiler deploys under heavy braking or at high speed, working in tandem with a large carbonfibre diffuser.

Aerodynamic efficiency extends to the 21in alloys, which feature active blade sections – five per wheel – that open to aid brake cooling and close at speed to reduce drag.

All of this combines for a drag coefficient of 0.19, which, if carried over, would make the production model one of the slipperiest cars on sale. The 0.19 figure is not as low as the EQXX's record-breaking 0.17, but Schäfer said the brief for the GT XX was to give precedence to downforce and cooling over outright drag reduction. To compensate, a complex underfloor aerodynamic package is designed to generate a venturi effect, contributing to what AMG describes as "exceptional aerodynamic balance".

At 5204mm long, 2130mm wide and 1317mm tall, the GT XX is 150mm longer, 61mm wider and 130mm lower than the current, V8-engined GT 4-Door Coupé launched in 2018. These dimensions are expected to carry over into the production car, which will be built at Mercedes-Benz's Sindelfingen manufacturing facility in Germany. By way of comparison, the Porsche Taycan is 4963mm long, 2144mm wide and 1379mm tall.

The vivid Sunset Beam orange paint is a nod to past Mercedes research prototypes and concepts including 1970's C111 and the more recent One-Eleven.

POWERTRAIN

The heart of the GT XX is its tri-motor drivetrain: two axial-flux motors at the rear, with a third up front that can decouple under light loads to reduce mechanical drag. Combined output is 1341bhp, which is sent to all four wheels via a fully variable 4Matic+ system.

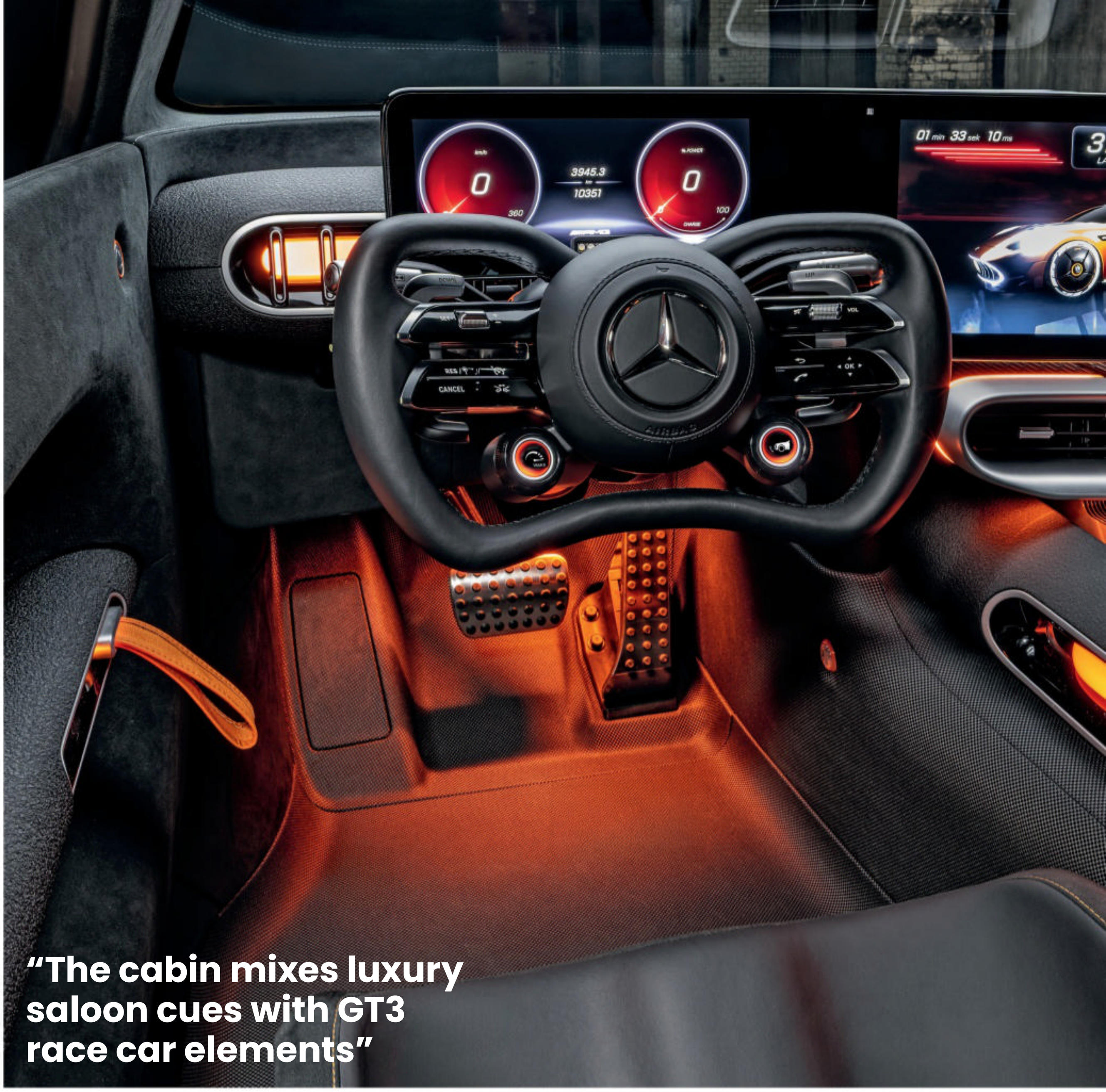
These motors, created by Mercedes-owned UK manufacturer Yasa, which also supplies Ferrari and Lamborghini, will be used by all electric AMGs and ▸

CHARGING
AMG

Panel between tail-lights can display an array of messages

Sculpted bodywork is designed to maximise cooling and downforce

Active blades on 21in alloys can help brake cooling or reduce drag



“The cabin mixes luxury saloon cues with GT3 race car elements”

◂ the most powerful Mercedes-Benz models.

Electricity is drawn from the 114kWh oil-cooled cylindrical-cell battery, which has been developed in partnership with AMG’s Formula 1 powertrain division in Brixworth, Northamptonshire. According to AMG, oil immersion offers greater surface area and more efficient heat transfer under sustained load than conventional liquid cooling.

Operating at “more than” 800V, the battery theoretically supports DC charging at up to 850kW, although no public chargers currently offer such capacity. AMG has not yet quoted a WLTP range, but it says the GT XX can recover around 249 miles of range in five minutes.

“Three years ago, 300kW charging on the road was unthinkable,” said Schäfer. “Now it’s reality. We’re already seeing 480kW stations in China. 1000kW parks will come.”

The GT XX uses a double-wishbone front and multi-link rear suspension set-up, combined with adaptive air springs. It also features the active roll control and rear-wheel steering systems set to be adopted by its production sibling. AMG claims a 50:50 weight distribution.

SOUNDTRACK

AMG says it has gone to great lengths to retain the emotional appeal that remains a draw of today’s V8-powered models. For example, an eight-speaker exterior sound system – mounted in the headlight housings – mimics acceleration sounds.

“AMG is about more than just performance,” said Schäfer. “It’s about emotion – how a car sounds. We believe an electric AMG can still deliver that experience.”

Inside, the cabin mixes luxury saloon cues with GT3 race car elements. Dual digital displays (10.25in and 14in) dominate the dash, while the steering wheel is inspired by the AMG One. Illuminated orange piping echoes the car’s high-voltage cabling, and seats feature 3D-printed ergonomic inserts.

Swathes of experimental materials adorn the interior, with biotech leather alternatives made from recycled GT3 tyres, protein-derived bio-silk door pulls and a visible-from-the-inside carbonfibre roof with no headliner. Even the floor uses recycled material, here printed in a chequered-flag pattern.

The GT XX’s production model will be joined by a closely related SUV, scheduled for UK launch in 2027 and conceived to take on the upcoming electric Porsche Cayenne.

Nevertheless, its unveiling comes as several performance car makers scale back their electric model plans. Ferrari has reportedly delayed its second electric model until at least 2028 due to weaker than expected orders, although it still plans to unveil its first purely electric model in October. Lamborghini, Porsche and Maserati have also postponed or cancelled forthcoming electric models.

GREG KABLE

Q&A: MARKUS SCHAFER, CHIEF TECHNICAL OFFICER, MERCEDES-BENZ

What does the GT XX say about AMG’s future in the electric age?
“AMG must remain authentic. That means drawing from the brand’s history and from more than 100 years of Mercedes motorsport. Both have always driven innovation. With the GT XX, just like the EQXX before it, the goal is to stretch the limits – technically, emotionally and in terms of relevance to future series production. This is not a one-off; it’s our test bed for the next generation of high-performance EVs.”

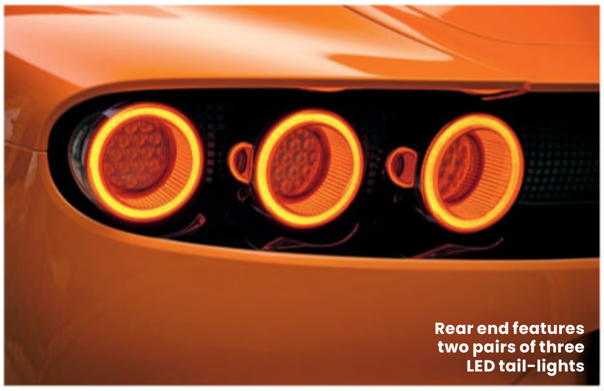
The EQXX pushed boundaries in efficiency and range. What’s the GT XX equivalent?
“It is about performance. We’re exploring how electric drive can deliver repeatable, usable performance – not just 0-100kph times. Everything we learn will shape the production car.”

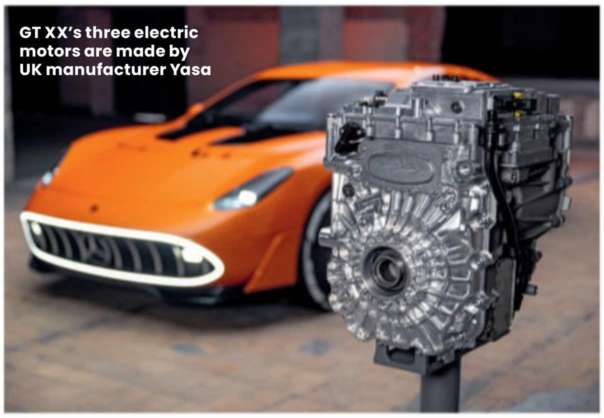
AMG is known for V8s and raw character. How does that translate to electric performance?
“AMG has always stood for more than just power. It’s about emotion – sound, feel, design, exclusivity and craftsmanship. That doesn’t go away with electric. The GT XX is full of those qualities. Even the sound is something we engineered intentionally to stir emotion.”

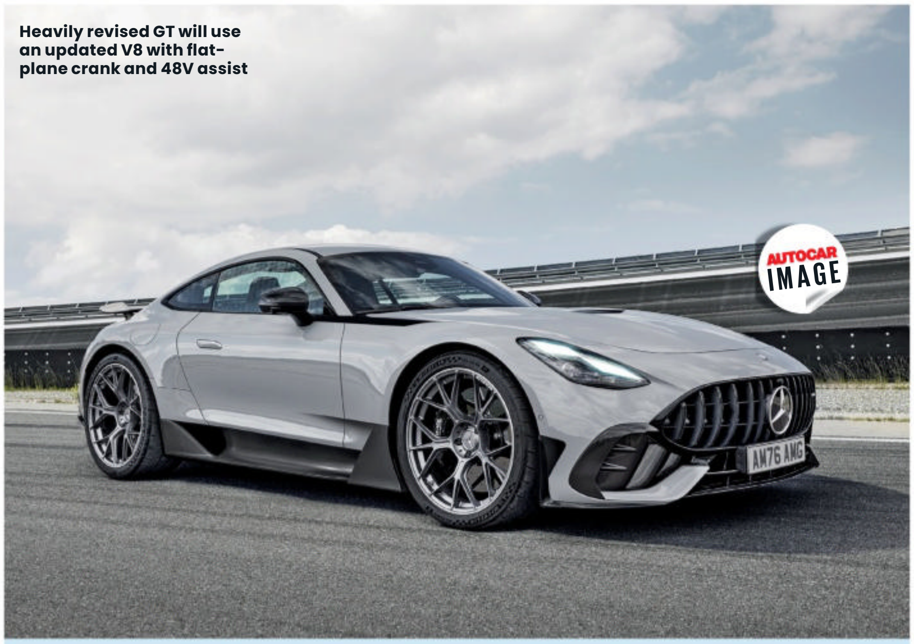
You mentioned a charging capacity of up to 850kW. Doesn’t that outpace infrastructure?
“Today’s public networks can’t match that figure, true. But think back three years – 300kW charging was a dream. Now it’s here. In China, there are already 480kW chargers. Soon we’ll see 1000kW charging parks. The GT XX is built for that future.”

Where does AMG go from here? What will the line-up look like by the end of the decade?
“We’ll continue building an exclusive, high-performance portfolio with strong links to AMG’s history and DNA. That includes new V8-powered cars and pure electric models built on cutting-edge platforms. The GT XX is a clear signpost: more performance, more emotion and more authenticity – across all types of propulsion.”

Innovative new materials include leather-like trim made from recycled tyres


Rear end features two pairs of three LED tail-lights


GT XX's three electric motors are made by UK manufacturer Yasa


Heavily revised GT will use an updated V8 with flat-plane crank and 48V assist

NEW V8 TO FLY THE ICE FLAG FOR MERCEDES-AMG MODELS

AS MERCEDES-AMG previews its electric future, it is also readying major updates for its top-tier combustion-engined models, centred on an update to its next-gen V8 powertrain and the decision to ditch its four-cylinder PHEV.

Speaking to Autocar, Mercedes-AMG CEO Michael Schiebe said the brand has "an incredible amount on our plate". He added: "We are working on many products; we are continuing to work on combustion engines. We are currently working on our next-generation V8. For our customers who love the V8, and we have a strong reputation and heritage there, in the future we will continue to provide that and other combustion engines. We want to make it stronger, more performant. We also have to ensure that it is more efficient to meet the regulations."

The first model to get AMG's new twin-turbocharged 4.0-litre V8 will be the CLE 63 S, due later this year, with insiders also suggesting the facelifted E-Class, due in 2027, could adopt the powerplant to reinstate an E63 model above the current six-cylinder E53 hybrid.

However, the most important cars to receive the new V8, according to AMG, are the SL and GT line-ups, arriving in 2027. The engine will power the core models in the range, including the SL 55, SL 63, GT 55 and GT 63. Power outputs remain under wraps, but sources suggest upwards of 600bhp in base form, with higher states of tune likely to be added later.

It is understood the smaller turbocharged 2.0-litre inline four-cylinder engine will remain for the entry-level SL 43. Insiders have also confirmed that V8 plug-in hybrid powertrains will return in the top-rung SL 63 SE Performance and GT 63 SE Performance – which offer 805bhp – owing to fleet CO_2 compliance regulations.

At the heart of the heavily reworked V8 engine is a flat-plane crankshaft – a technology last used by Mercedes in the 2020 GT Black Series. The design delivers sharper throttle response and higher rev potential, and it is both lighter and more compact.

The new V8 is also said to be paired with a 48V mild-hybrid system to bolster low-end response and reduce emissions.

A senior insider confirmed that, following the SL and GT, future petrol-powered Mercedes-AMG models will also adopt either the V8 or an updated version of today's inline six-cylinder engine.

This follows a stark loss of sales after the introduction of the four-cylinder plug-in hybrid drivetrain used by the current C63 – which is set to adopt the new six-pot.

Speaking about the decision, a source said: "Technically, the four-cylinder is one of the most advanced drivetrains available in a production car. It's also right up there on performance. But despite this, it failed to resonate with our traditional customers. We've recognised that."

Next-generation SL will still be offered in entry-level four-cylinder form

AUTOCAR IMAGE

KIA LINES UP NEW EVs AS CEO COMMITS TO CITY CAR

Boss says non-EV powertrains are also needed to meet global demand

The next wave of Kia EVs is being prepared for launch by the end of the decade, among them an entry-level model as well as a next-generation architecture that will underpin replacements for the likes of the EV6 and EV9.

Kia's rollout of electric cars continues apace, with the current EV3, EV6 and EV9 being joined this year by the EV4 and EV5, followed by the EV2 in 2026. Now the firm's efforts are focused on what comes next.

An entry-level EV that sits below the EV2 and is priced below €25,000 (about £21,000) is the major new addition, but replacements for the EV6 and EV9 will mark step-changes for the brand as it moves to software-defined vehicles (SDVs).

New range-extender EV technology is also in the works, alongside continued development of hybrids and even internal-combustion-engined models as Kia plans to continue offering a whole range of vehicles that is now expanding beyond cars and into vans and pick-ups for the first time.

SMALLER KIAS

Kia president and CEO Ho Sung Song confirmed his commitment to entry-level models and keeping his cars affordable and accessible, and to that end suggested a baby Kia is deep into its development.

Song said Kia was in no rush to replace the current Picanto city car, which is still selling well in Europe, and the strength of Kia's electric car range means the firm isn't under any imminent pressure from the CO_2 regulations that have doomed other city cars on the market in recent years.

The Picanto, heavily updated in 2023, would therefore remain on sale up until the point that Kia was able to create an entry-level electric city car for less than €25,000. The brand feels it is important to keep such an affordable entry-level model in its range.

Song said the mooted entry-level EV was "homework" for Kia at the moment, and a sub-€25,000 model was "one area we are studying and developing".

Given Song's comments, it seems inevitable that when the Picanto does reach the end of its life – which is expected to be before the end of the decade – it will be replaced by the entry-level EV rather than an ICE model. Yet there is a scenario in which the two models are sold alongside each other, depending on how CO_2 rules develop. Other car makers have already taken this approach.

Kia design director Karim Habib said the firm was looking at Japanese brand Muji for inspiration for its smaller cars. The clothing and homeware retailer focuses on simplicity and utility, and Kia was exploring how to "reduce things to their very essence and still have a desirability to them".

Habib said this work also included customisation and "how you design something super-basic that you can customise or individualise for different types of customers". He added: "In our view, that's where it can be really interesting in a lower-end price bracket."

Kia's rollout of modular PBV models begins this year with the PV5 van

"Customers are expecting more innovation in our vehicles," says Song (right)

SOFTWARE-DEFINED VEHICLES

Kia is preparing to embrace SDVs and launch a new architecture for its larger models using the technology. SDVs move a car away from having a host of different sub-systems to just a few core systems that are all centrally integrated.

The approach allows for greater stability and reliability for the car. It is also easier to update and manage across multiple vehicles, because they all share the same 'brain'. Song said this would allow Kia to decouple hardware and software development and allow shorter development times.

He added that development work on a new SDV architecture had been ongoing for some three years and a pilot project concept may be shown next year. That is a reference to the 'SDV Pace Car' that Kia confirmed earlier this year and which is the development mule for this project.

Following this timeline through to production would fit with Kia launching an EV6 replacement off this new 800V architecture. A second-generation EV9 should also be due by the end of the decade.

Further benefits for future Kias from SDVs will be more personalised user interfaces inside customers' vehicles and "frequent upgrading of software to give them freshness for their vehicle", according to Song, who said it could help bring down the costs of cars because "our development cycle is shorter so the cost is much cheaper".

Song added: "Because we are decoupling hardware and software, we can be more flexible making different kinds of vehicles based on the same platform."

Kia will also introduce learnings from its new range of 'PBV' vans into the development of its future cars, particularly around the integration of software and hardware. The PV5, Kia's first van, will be followed by a larger PV7 van in 2027 and a PV9 in 2029.

OTHER POWERTRAINS

Song said Kia will continue to invest in all relevant powertrain technologies because it is a global car maker responding to different market demands.

Song is a firm believer in the

Kia is developing a sub-€25k entry EV to sit below the EV2

Kia's electric car line-up will double in size over the coming year

switch to EVs and believes that in Europe in particular Kia can "drive volume from a full EV line-up" that is "very complete" thanks to a "strong trend" towards EVs in the market, but Kia is remaining flexible in its approach.

"The final destination in Europe is EVs, which is why I want to be a very strong EV player in Europe," said Song. "But if we look at worldwide demand we should have alternative powertrains, like hybrids, plug-in [hybrids] and EREVs [extended-range electric vehicles, aka RExs]."

He said range-extender technology was particularly interesting for larger, heavier vehicles to which pure EV technology was less well suited. The first REx Kia is expected be to launched by the end of the decade as part of an evolution of the car maker's hybrid offering for larger models.

Combustion engines will continue to be important for emerging markets like North Africa where "they don't have the infrastructure" for electrification. To that end, Song is not putting an end date on Kia's development of internal combustion engines.

FUTURE DESIGN

Kia is already planning a new evolution for the design of its models, and Song said he recognises the importance of staying ahead and maintaining innovation in this area.

He added: "Design is one of the highest preferences for our customers buying our cars, but today's design philosophy has already been in the market for five years. We continually think about how to renew it.

"If we repeat again and again [with the same design], maybe customers will feel it is boring, so we have to think about how to renew vehicles. We will continue to study what can be improved and renewed for our customers."

> "Kia is a global car maker responding to different market demands"

Habib confirmed that concept cars would continue to be shown by Kia, adding that the firm was likely to unveil one later this year, although he didn't confirm any specifics.

FUTURE INNOVATIONS

A rollout of an AI assistant in all of Kia's new vehicles is also on the way, to better control a car's wider functions and introduce "more innovation" to future Kias, according Song.

He added: "Customers are expecting more innovation in our vehicles. They are experiencing all-new functions from smartphones. They want the same in our vehicles."

Song said Kia has to be "more innovative" in providing new features in vehicles, and Kia is working with more partner companies, including Samsung, to help it do so.

Kia will also continue to invest in the development of full autonomous driving, which Song believes will "definitely be for the convenience of the customers in the future". This approach will be baked into the SDV architecture in development.

MARK TISSHAW

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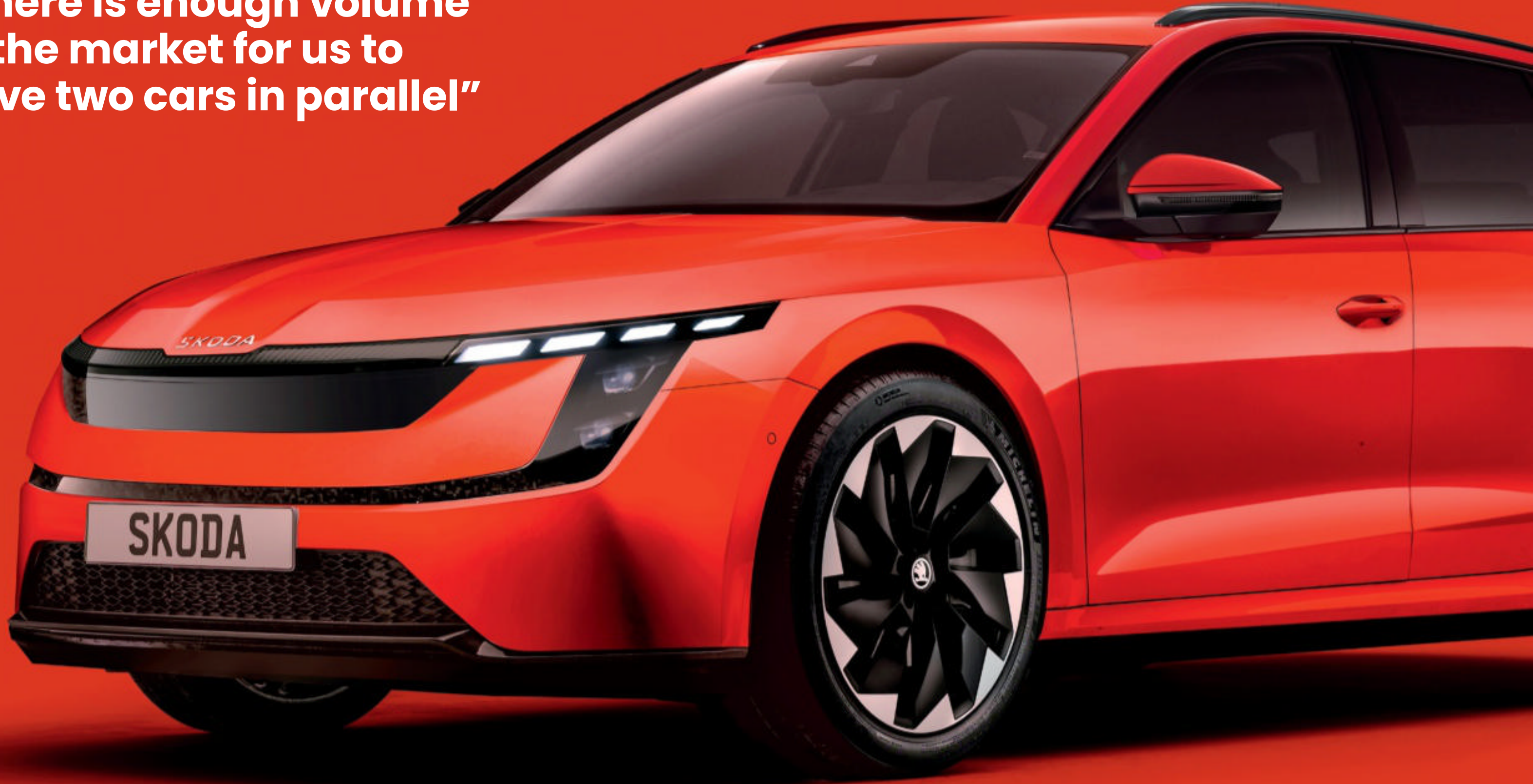
> **“There is enough volume in the market for us to have two cars in parallel”**



NEW OCTAVIA TO ‘TAKE A STEP’ FOR SKODA DESIGN

Munich show concept will preview next-generation electric estate

A new Skoda concept car that previews the next-generation Octavia estate will create “a lot of buzz and controversial discussion” around the brand as it moves into a new era of design.

Skoda CEO Klaus Zellmer told Autocar that it will be a “further step” for the marque in terms of its design, but the new model will still “clearly be recognisable as a Skoda”.

The estate concept will be revealed at the Munich motor show in September. It is likely to be based on the Volkswagen Group’s upcoming SSP platform, which is being designed for the next generation of electric cars and will eventually replace the current MEB architecture.

The MEB platform is not well suited to lower-slung saloon and estate models. It is designed instead for raised crossovers, while the SSP platform can be applied to lower-riding cars as well as crossovers. The next generation of automated driving features offered on the SSP platform also appeals to Skoda.

Rather than being a sign of the marque trying to push out of the mainstream, Zellmer said the new Octavia concept will help “develop the brand and the aspiration of the brand, but it will stay true to our roots”.

A production version of the concept isn’t due until the end of the decade. However, Zellmer hinted that it would be an option for the electric estate to be sold alongside an updated version of the current combustion-engined Octavia, to ensure that the brand continues to offer a full range of powertrains.

The Fabia and Kamiq will be updated to Euro 7-spec and stay on sale beyond 2030

“There is enough volume in the market for us to have two cars in parallel,” he added. “It all depends on customer sentiment, especially in the fleet market. We’ll keep all avenues open.”

A plug-in hybrid version of the Octavia will also be relaunched, said Zellmer, following a revival of the PHEV market.

Zellmer confirmed that a refresh for the Fabia, Scala and Kamiq, which will update them to Euro 7 emissions regulations, will keep them on sale “beyond 2030”.

This reverses a previous decision to phase those models out and replace them with the new Epiq entry-level electric car due

CRUCIAL EX60 ON ITS WAY

Volvo has confirmed its new EX60 is due “early” next year. The model, equivalent to the XC60, Volvo’s best-seller, will be crucial to the firm’s ambitions. When it arrives, Volvo will have a six-strong EV line-up.

C3 AND DS 3 RECALLED

Owners of Mk1 DS 3s and Mk2 Citroën C3s built between 2009 and 2019 have been told to stop driving their cars after a French woman was killed when her C3’s airbag exploded. Owners will be notified by letter.

AUTOCAR IMAGE

in the middle of next year (see separate story, right).

Zellmer also said there is now price parity "but not cost parity" for electric cars and combustion-engined models, so a key focus of EV development is to bring costs down where possible.

Another new electric Skoda due next year is a production version of the seven-seat Vision 7S concept car, which will be the new "flagship" for the brand. Zellmer said Skoda is still working on a name for the car but internally it is called Space BEV, due to its amount of interior space.

After that, Zellmer said Skoda will be "at the peak of our portfolio", and the introduction of any other models is unlikely.

He said this includes any cars that "speak to the hearts, like a convertible, because full focus is on our portfolio that covers the big footprint" of the market.

Zellmer added: "I would love to see the Yeti again, because I think that car has such a great character, such a good name and a loyal base." However, there are no plans to revive the model.

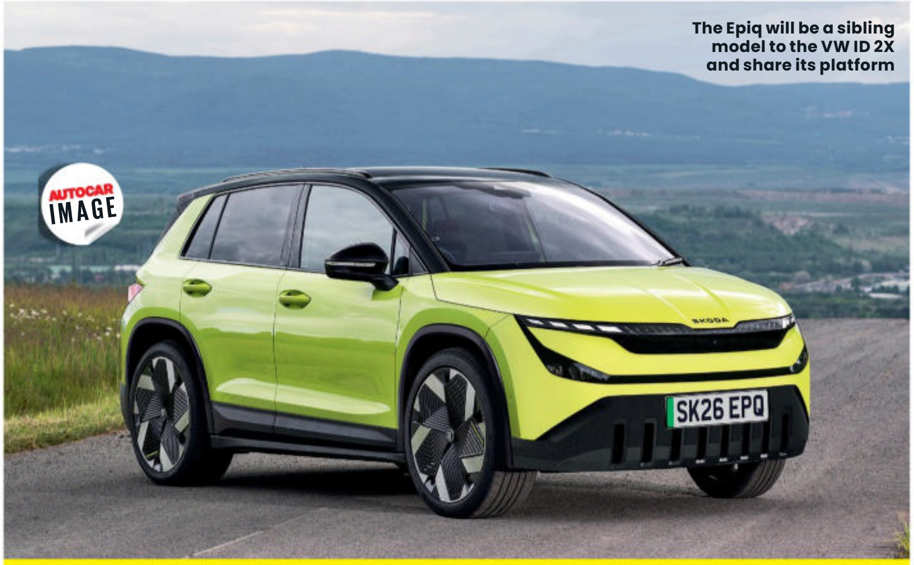
Neither are there plans for Skoda to launch any commercial vehicles, confirmed Zellmer.

However, he did say that there is potential for Skoda to bring its Indian-built models to the UK, including the Kushaq, as part of the India-UK trade deal. "The production cost and quality standards in India offer an opportunity to be cost-competitive and use scale," said Zellmer. But he conceded there might be too much overlap with Skoda's existing models for that option to be viable.

Another project for Skoda is leading not only the development of combustion engines for the VW Group but also the ongoing development of the MQB architecture, which underpins the likes of the Octavia, because it is so closely tied to combustion engines.

No end date has been set on the development of that architecture. A decision on the level of future investment into it will depend on how CO_2 legislation evolves.
MARK TISSHAW

Vision 7S concept will make production next year as new flagship



The Epiq will be a sibling model to the VW ID 2X and share its platform

EPIQ BREAKS COVER AS CHUNKY, ENTRY-LEVEL EV

TESTING IS BEGINNING to ramp up for Skoda's new entry-level EV, ahead of its arrival in the middle of next year.

Set to be priced under £25,000, the Epiq will sit below the new Elroq in the Czech firm's line-up. It will use the Volkswagen Group's new MEB Entry EV platform and be a sibling to the VW ID 2 and Cupra Raval superminis and the the VW ID 2X crossover.

The Epiq will rival the likes of the Fiat Grande Panda and the reborn Renault 4 and has already been revealed as a concept, but this is our first chance to see how Skoda's new EV will transition to production form.

These latest spy pictures suggest that the road-going Epiq will retain the concept's chunky, rugged proportions as well as, most notably, the lower split grille at the front. Lights seen shining through the test vehicle's heavy camouflage indicate that the concept's nose-flanking daytime-running lights will also carry over.

High-set DRLs can just be seen above the headlight

Under the camouflage, the Epiq will follow the larger Elroq and Enyaq by adopting Skoda's new Modern Solid design language, which, says the brand, majors on "robustness, functionality and authenticity".

While no interior pictures of the test mule have been taken, Skoda has already confirmed that the Epiq will be the first Skoda to carry that Modern Solid theme into the cabin.

As part of a push by the wider VW Group, and in keeping with the brand's practical and utilitarian style, the Epiq is expected to feature an array of physical buttons for key functions, including on the steering wheel. It will also major on storage, said Skoda, with boot space of 490 litres (the same as the VW ID 2all concept).

No powertrain details have yet been confirmed, but the VW Group has said the MEB Entry platform will accommodate a single front-mounted electric motor and battery options of 38kWh and 56kWh. Skoda is targeting a range in excess of 400km (249 miles).

SPY SHOTS

Test mule appears to retain concept's split lower grille

Chunky styling gives the Epiq a compact but rugged look

RANGIE SPORT SV STAYS PUT

JLR has made the previously limited-edition Range Rover Sport SV a permanent fixture in the line-up. The 626bhp SUV costs £139,995. A special SV Black edition, priced £15,000 more, has also been launched.

NISSAN PONDERS EURO PHEV

Nissan could bring a plug-in hybrid powertrain to Europe. "We are looking at it," said powertrain boss Matthew Wright. Nissan's first PHEV, the China-built Frontier Pro pick-up, is not planned for Europe.

NEW AMALFI REVEALED AS 631BHP ‘ACCESSIBLE’ FERRARI

Entry-level Ferrari gets new name, fresh styling and updated V8

The new 631bhp Ferrari Amalfi has been unveiled as the firm’s new entry-level model, with more power, overhauled styling and revamped aerodynamics compared with its Roma predecessor.

Its underpinnings are shared with the Roma, but Ferrari says it is an all-new model, with nearly every panel changed and the front-mounted 4.0-litre twin-turbocharged V8 extensively reworked.

That reworking means the Amalfi is a more powerful proposition than the car it replaces, with an output of 631bhp – an increase of 19bhp. Torque remains at 561lb ft, and power is delivered via the same eight-speed dual-clutch transmission for a 0-62mph time of 3.3sec, 0.1sec quicker than the Roma.

While those increases in power and speed seem modest, Ferrari has instead concentrated on making the engine more responsive when operating in higher gears, especially third and fourth. This is most apparent in its 0-124mph time, which now takes 9.0sec – cut by 0.6sec.

Key to this increased responsiveness is a 1.3kg-lighter camshaft, which also allows for a higher engine revolution speed, the fitment of the 12Cillindri’s Bosch-made ECU, which optimises engine performance, and new ducts in the headlights to send more air to the turbochargers while also reducing drag.

Yet while it possesses more power, one of the entry-level Ferrari’s key focus areas was accessibility, according to product development chief Gianmaria Fulgenzi. As a result, the Amalfi is one of the most “drivable” Ferrari’s ever made, which is important because 50% of Roma buyers had never driven a Ferrari before, according to Fulgenzi.

“We wanted to create a car that was for new-to-Ferrari owners, perhaps experiencing a Ferrari for the first time,” he said. “It had to be easy to drive, not too intimidating, even with more than 600bhp. This car is designed to be accessible to everyone while still offering experienced drivers the ability to use its full potential, whether on mountain roads or highways.”

To meet the accessibility brief, work was done to make the Amalfi “more predictable”. New underbody lips and a redesigned active rear wing both work to better manage air flow. With the wing in its most extreme of three positions, it adds an extra 110kg of downforce compared with the Roma.

The Amalfi also has a brake-by-wire system that replaces the mechanical braking components with a computer-controlled set-up that in turn translates pedal pressure into the appropriate braking force.

This, said Fulgenzi, makes the car more usable “in any weather condition” and is a “huge improvement” compared with the Roma. “With this system the driver can have the same braking feeling and distance in every situation,” he added. “It is more predictable.”

The changes make the Amalfi quiet, stable and safer when driven in its comfort-focused modes but also “a very high-performing car” when pushed. “We wanted to have a car that everyone can use daily,” said Fulgenzi. “When you are with your family, you want a car that is completely safe. When you are alone, you can [change the settings] to improve your engagement.”

The mechanical changes are extensive, but the design refresh is more evolution than revolution. Chief designer Flavio Manzoni

OFFICIAL PICTURES

Cabin features a bold central ‘bridge’ and three display screens

Amalfi shares the Roma’s overall look, but all the body panels are new

FERRARI'S CHANGE OF HEART ON HAPTIC TECH

Ferrari says it made a mistake by replacing physical buttons with haptic controls on its steering wheels, and it will reverse the decision across its range.

The move begins with the Amalfi, which is also fitted with the traditional start/stop button that owners wanted to return. The haptic tech was first introduced in the SF90 hypercar.

Commercial boss Enrico Galliera said the tech was introduced when trying to recreate the speed of interaction experienced while using a phone. He said: "When we decided to create the SF90, the brief was to have the most performing Ferrari ever. We wanted to establish a distance versus our competitor. To achieve that, we put all the most advanced available technologies.

"We pushed our team to redesign the digital interaction. When we interact with our phone, the execution is quick. The final execution was innovative, but when you use it you're also driving, and the end result [goes against] our objective of eyes on the road, hands on the steering wheel.

"We will rebalance the ratio between digital buttons and physical buttons. This will be deployed in every new launch we put in the market."

said the aim was to keep the Roma's design, "but give it a modern touch", with a focus on simplicity and purity.

Ferrari says every exterior panel – bar the glasshouse – is new, and it is at the front where most of the styling changes have been made. Gone is the Roma's sleek, pointed nose and grille, now replaced by a new design that is similar to that of the larger Purosangue SUV.

"It was important for us to give a new identity to this car, which is consistent with the identity of the new Ferraris, without repeating the same elements," said Manzoni. "But there should be a certain family feeling across the range."

In the cabin a new centre console, referred to by Ferrari as the interior "bridge", is milled from a solid block of aluminium. It is joined by a new 10.25in central infotainment screen, which sits alongside the 15.6in digital instrument cluster and the 8.8in passenger screen.

One of the biggest changes compared with the Roma is the reintroduction of physical steering wheel controls (see box, above). This includes the start/stop button, which was requested by owners.

Asked why the Italian car maker changed the name from Roma to Amalfi, despite it still looking similar enough that customers may refer to it as "the new Roma", marketing boss Enrico Galliera compared it to art. "When you buy a painting, the name should be new. It deserves a new name," he said.

Deliveries of the new Ferrari Amalfi will begin in left-hand-drive markets at the start of next year, followed by right-hand-drive models soon after. Prices in Italy start at €240,000 (£204,700).

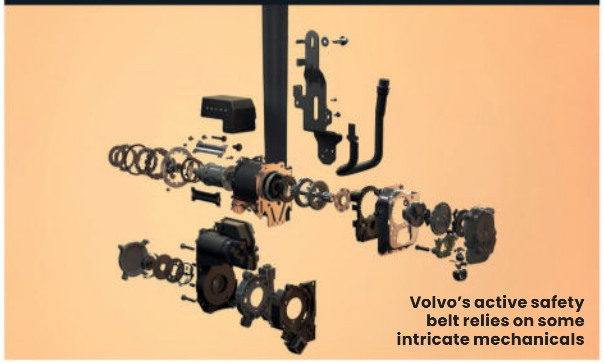
The Roma Spider will stay on sale alongside the Amalfi, with a drop-top version of the new sports car expected to arrive in a few years' time.

WILL RIMELL

The Roma's 4.0 twin-turbo V8 has been tuned to make 631bhp

Next big thing

JESSE CROSSE



Volvo's active safety belt relies on some intricate mechanicals

BELT AND BRACES: VOLVO'S NEW TAKE ON IN-CAR SAFETY

WITH SO MUCH emphasis on developing ADAS and fully autonomous vehicles, it may seem as if the industry has run out of ideas for improving the basics.

That isn't the case. Next year, Volvo's ultra-sophisticated smart safety belt makes its debut in the EX60. It's 66 years since Volvo invented the three-point belt and made the patent freely available to all car makers. The latest version is the world's first multi-adaptive safety belt, which is said to give better protection than existing systems. The belt adapts to traffic conditions and the type of individual wearing it using real-time data from interior and exterior sensors.

The belt takes into account the occupant's height, weight, body shape and seating position. Larger occupants will be restrained by a higher belt load setting, while the setting for lighter occupants will be lower to reduce the likelihood of a broken rib. The belts use load-limiting profiles to control the force applied to the user when an impact happens, and the number of profiles the system uses has been increased from the usual three to 11.

No two crashes are the same; each one has unique characteristics such as direction, speed and the posture of occupants at the point of impact. When the impact occurs, the systems analyse those characteristics in milliseconds, and the safety belt selects the most appropriate setting. The design of the system is based on more than five decades of research and draws on a database of information on more than 80,000 occupants involved in real-world accidents. The system can be continuously improved by over-the-air updates as more data becomes available.

The new belt is part of Volvo's broader "safety ecosystem" and integrates seamlessly with airbags and occupant detection and driver assistance systems. It has been tested and improved at the Volvo Cars Safety Centre crash lab and is said to exceed regulatory requirements for automotive safety.

The original three-point belt was developed by Volvo's first safety engineer, Nils Bohlin, who had worked on safety kit for pilots at Saab's aviation division. Two-point diagonal belts were an accessory for Volvo cars, but the company didn't think they were satisfactory – and with the benefit of hindsight, they weren't. A US patent had been pending since 1952 on a belt designed for aircraft, but a buckle positioned over the abdomen could injure internal organs on impact. Bohlin's design moved the buckle to the side, so the belt was pulled tight across the body in a collision.

The rest, as they say, is history – and clearly what is perhaps the greatest piece of automotive safety equipment ever invented is still evolving.

Active belt reacts according to the dynamics of impact

COMBUSTION-POWERED HOT HYUNDAIS ON THE HORIZON

N sub-brand commits to diverse powertrains in step with parent firm

Hyundai's N performance brand will not restrict itself exclusively to electric sports cars in the future, and is evaluating hot new combustion models to sit alongside the Ioniq 5 N and upcoming Ioniq 6 N.

The Korean firm's sporting division – its answer to the likes of BMW M and Volkswagen R – was launched with the i30 N in 2017. It followed that up with the smaller i20 N in 2021, before revealing the Ioniq 5 N as its first EV in 2023 and removing the two petrol hot hatchbacks from sale shortly afterwards.

Following the unveiling of the Ioniq 6 N at Goodwood next month, the performance brand will have a two-car, exclusively electric line-up, but N division boss Joon Park has suggested more models will follow – and they won't necessarily use pure-battery powertrains.

Speaking at the Autocar Awards ceremony in London, where the Ioniq 5 N was named as one of 2025's Five-Star Cars, Park said the sub-brand will keep step with its parent company Hyundai in maintaining a diverse powertrain offering over the coming years.

"The problem we have is a perception from the media and our fans that Hyundai N is only focusing on the EV world, which is not true," he said. "Even though we are going to introduce the Ioniq 6 N at the Goodwood Festival of Speed, we are not limiting ourselves to EVs."

Park stopped short of confirming any specifics of these new models, but Hyundai has already confirmed it will respond to slower than expected global uptake of EVs with a significantly expanded line-up of hybrid models. It will also launch its first range-extender EV model in the US next year.

Park suggested that no specific technology is off the table for the N brand. He added: "We're going forward with EVs, of course, as well as all the other proposals we could do. For N, imagination and courage are the words we need to remember."

The i20 N was launched in 2021 but taken off sale in favour of EV models

"There is a perception that N is only focusing on EVs"

INVESTMENT KEY TO UK CAR-MAKING REVIVAL

THE UK IS aiming to regain its place as a top global vehicle production location, following the unveiling of a new 10-year industrial strategy.

The government's new plan provides the foundation for major reductions in commercial energy costs, more favourable investment conditions, enhanced skills development and improved trading terms for UK-based car makers.

The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders welcomed the announcement with a new 10-point plan that aims to "build on the foundation" of the industrial strategy and which, combined, can be used as a "springboard" for growth.

The SMMT believes the country can become one of the world's top 15 vehicle manufacturing sites by 2030 and deliver a £50 billion boost to the economy.

One of the key points in the 10-step plan – which includes EV retail buying incentives and a public charger mandate – is to "reduce the cost of energy and support manufacturers to remain competitive". According to the SMMT, a UK vehicle factory currently pays more than double the European average in energy costs, partly due to much higher energy taxes.

The government will invest more than £2bn over four years to cut energy prices by up to 25% for more than 7000 businesses. However, it has not yet said which businesses are eligible. The trade body called for "rapid implementation" of the energy cost reforms, estimating a 20% reduction in the sector's electricity bill.

The government has also proposed relief on standing charges for energy-intensive industries, which, argues the SMMT, should apply to the wider automotive sector. If that exemption is made, it could amount to another 20% saving for manufacturers.

SMMT CEO Mike Hawes said: "We need to cut those costs our rivals do not face. We need a compelling offer that redefines the UK's

SMMT boss Mike Hawes has welcomed the new government proposals

The performance brand has previously experimented with hydrogen fuel cell power, revealing the striking N Vision 74 concept in 2022 as a fully functional rolling laboratory, with 670bhp at the rear axle and a total range of more than 370 miles supplied by its 95kW fuel cell.

Various reports over the past three years have claimed the car has been given the green light for production, but Hyundai has never officially confirmed plans to put it in showrooms. The firm's subsequent performance car concepts have all been battery-powered, rather than FCEVs.

FELIX PAGE

appeal as a place to invest."

That investment will be key to a UK output target of 1.35 million vehicles by 2035 – up from just under one million now. Hawes says this is likely to depend on new manufacturers beginning production in the UK.

Chinese firms including MG-owner SAIC and Omoda-Jaecoo owner Chery have previously expressed interest in building cars in the UK, and a government official at the SMMT Summit indicated that Changan – which is about to launch its Deepal EV brand here – plans to set up a network of UK assembly facilities in the coming years.

LAND CRUISER GOES MHEV

Toyota has electrified the Land Cruiser with a new 48V mild-hybrid system that promises "smoother performance in both on- and off-road driving".

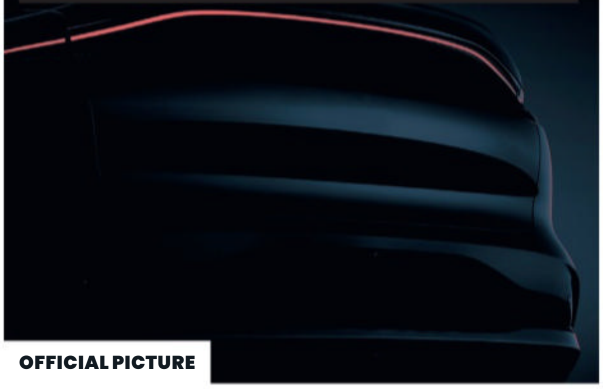
The new Land Cruiser 48V uses the same electrified diesel powertrain as the mild-hybrid Toyota Hilux launched earlier this year, combining a 2.8-litre four-cylinder engine with a 48V starter-generator.

Compared with the standard car, Toyota says the set-up gives smoother acceleration and improved efficiency, along with enhanced off-road ability.

Toyota says all Land Cruiser models will use the new MHEV powertrain in the UK. Prices for the MHEV Land Cruiser line-up have yet to be confirmed.

MG TEES UP MODEL Y RIVAL

MG is poised to launch a new Tesla Model Y rival at the Goodwood Festival of Speed. An official preview image appears to show the IM6 crossover, suggesting that MG will bring the more premium-focused brand to the UK. It's already on sale in other right-hand-drive markets, such as Australia.



OFFICIAL PICTURE

Grapevine

MARK TISSHAW

Nissan R&D boss Moss says efficiency shaped new Leaf's development

AT THE FINAL Car of the Year 2023 test event in Belgium, where the Nissan Ariya was shortlisted, Nissan Europe R&D boss David Moss took great interest in my 400-mile drive home in a BMW iX and how many charging stops were planned.

"One" was my target, yet Moss highlighted how it was also important for that stop to be as short as possible and that the car should take on as little charge as possible to avoid motorway charging prices compared with cheaper home rates.

"My sense is that bigger is seen as better when it comes to battery size," said Moss before that journey. "If you buy with range in mind, you pay a lot more and add weight to the car. If 75% of your miles are in town, you're carrying weight and hurting efficiency. If your goal is to have the most efficient EV, then you use the smallest battery. It can be confusing."

The new Nissan Leaf will showcase exactly how Moss, our Mundy Award for Engineering winner at the 2024 Autocar Awards, tries to balance competing factors and challenges: battery size, range, efficiency, charging speed, aerodynamics and more.

The Leaf is the first electric car to enter a third generation. Moss says "a massive amount" of consolidated knowledge has gone into it, the company having studied how the 700,000-plus Leaf owners to date had used their cars. The goal is to ensure that as much of the electrical energy as possible is "going into powering the wheels".

The first-gen Leaf had a 24kWh battery, but it was the same size as the new car's 75kWh pack. The new Leaf's electric motor is 20% more efficient and 10% smaller than the previous car's, and it's quieter. Big strides have been made in packaging, cooling and aerodynamics "as tools to deliver the range".

That battery is enough to deliver 375 miles of range – and it can do so at motorway speeds (Nissan quotes more than 200 miles at 80mph). The car can also prime the battery for charging en route, so you're on your way quickly.

A sophisticated cooling system links to the nav system to decide, based on expected load and where the car is going, whether to cool the battery with the active grille shutter or use some battery energy for cooling via the liquid cooling system.

This level of development over just three generations is "massive" compared with an ICE car, says Moss, adding that EVs are on a "totally different" development curve. Electric motors are relatively free from the emissions regulations that surround internal combustion engines, and this allows for speedier development.

Moss said: "With ICE, regulations are massive. A lot of what we have to do is calibration. EVs are much simpler, because they aren't hit so much with regulation. You can put your efforts into driving efficiencies."

"Nissan studied how the 700,000-plus Leaf owners to date used their cars"

LEXUS MODELS BEING TARGETED BY THIEVES

Brand has five of the top eight cars most likely to be stolen

Five Lexus models were among the top 10 cars most likely to be stolen in 2024, according to government data – and the Range Rover, previously a high-profile target for car thieves, is now among the most protected.

Last year, more than 61,000 cars were stolen across the UK. The Ford Fiesta – the country's most popular second-hand car, with 306,207 sales in 2024 – topped the table for overall number of thefts, at 4719.

However, new analysis of the latest DVLA data, which ranks stolen cars as a proportion of the total number registered, paints an alternative picture.

It reveals the Lexus ES 300 as the model most likely to be stolen in 2024, with one in 30 taken. It is followed by the Lexus RX 450 and Mercedes GLS, both one in 39.

The other Lexus models in a top 10 dominated by slightly older and relatively low-volume, higher-value cars are the LC 500 (fifth place, one in 55), the UX 250 (sixth, one in 62) and the NX 300 (eighth, one in 75).

Applying the same analysis to the Fiesta ranks the model in 312th place.

According to the analysis by PR agency Loop, Lexus is the second-most-likely brand to be stolen (one in 120) after Abarth (one in 116). The Abarth most likely to be stolen is the 595, with a one-in-87 chance, ranking it ninth in the model table.

A spokesman for Toyota premium brand Lexus said: "Toyota GB has invested millions of pounds in a variety of security solutions. Our anti-theft measures form part of a nationwide customer care offering.

"For example, at a cost of more than £10 million to Lexus, selected customers were provided with a free Tracker vehicle location service. As a result, a 96% recovery rate has been achieved. We have subsequently rolled out Tracker installation as an option for buyers of certain models."

Following similar incidents of theft, JLR updated security software for its new and existing vehicles last year. As a result, having previously been among the most stolen models, the Range Rover now ranks 52nd in the table of cars most likely to be stolen, behind other premium SUVs such as the Bentley Bentayga (36th) and Mercedes GLS (third).

"Lexus is making considerable efforts to protect its customers' cars but JLR suffered a rise in thefts sooner than it and so has had more time to react and develop solutions," said Clive Wain, head of police liaison at Tracker. "However, its cars are still being stolen. There is a thriving market overseas for Lexus, JLR and other premium vehicles and we recover many at docksides. Until this export market ends, recovering these vehicles will remain an ongoing programme for us."

Commenting on Abarth and Fiesta thefts, Mark Silvester, a crime prevention specialist at West Midlands Police, said: "These cars are usually stolen to be broken for parts. Fortunately, we're identifying more stolen cars and locating and closing down chop shops where they are dismantled.

"Among other counter-measures, we advise people to have their cars serviced at a garage or main dealer with access to the latest security software updates."

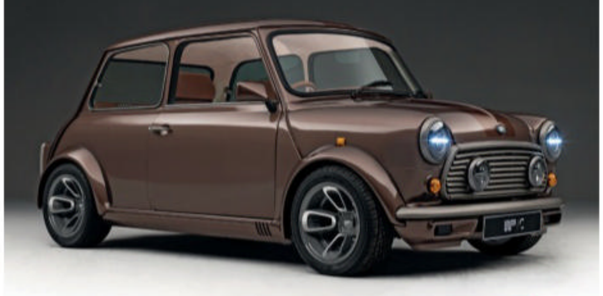
JOHN EVANS

UK'S MOST STOLEN: HOW MANY OF THEM WERE NICKED IN 2024

1		**LEXUS ES 300**	**1 in 30**
2		**LEXUS RX 450**	**1 in 39**
2		**MERCEDES GLS**	**1 in 39**
4		**ALFA ROMEO STELVIO**	**1 in 54**
5		**LEXUS LC 500**	**1 in 55**
6		**LEXUS UX 250**	**1 in 62**
7		**KIA STINGER**	**1 in 65**
8		**LEXUS NX 300**	**1 in 75**
9		**ABARTH 595**	**1 in 87**
10		**ALFA ROMEO GIULIA**	**1 in 88**

SOURCE: DVLA

MINI TURNS HOT HATCH



Ian Callum's eponymous design house has linked up with renowned Mini coachbuilder Wood & Pickett to reimagine the city car as a 110bhp hot hatch. Its engine is upsized to 1310cc and gets a new cylinder head. Prices start at £75,000.

OFFICIAL PICTURES

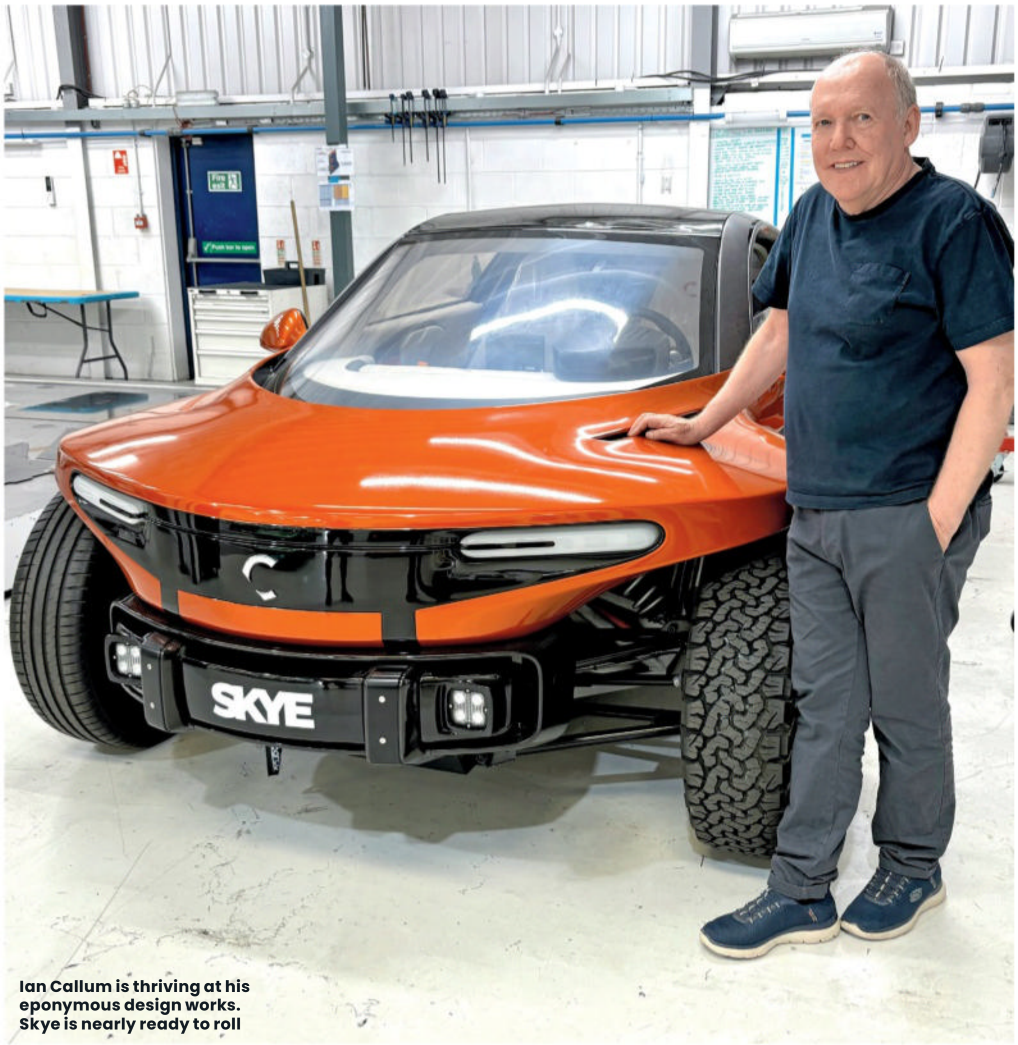
MY WEEK IN CARS

Steve Cropley

MONDAY

If you want your motoring life affirmed, find a thriving low-volume car business and – if they have the time for you – see if you can hang out for a while with the people who run the place. I dropped in to see former Jaguar design boss and all-round car guru Ian Callum at his lair on the outskirts of Warwick, where, with two equally talented partners, he has been running his Callum-branded design studio and bespoke car creation works.

The business at hand was to view the latest Wood & Pickett Mini that the Callum team has created and intends to build at a rate of 20 to 30 a year, for prices starting around £75,000. The subtly enhanced and re-engineered car looked beautiful, but you'll have to look elsewhere for pictures: it had no interior when I called, and they were understandably not keen on photographs. Instead, I snapped Ian with Callum Skye, the sweetly styled and compact EV they proposed a couple of years ago. The interior is in and it's nearly ready for testing. Then, for the sake of completion, we dialled up Callum's model mate David Gandy, arbiter of fashion, optimal male and the first W&P Mini customer. David lives in West London and will use the car as a daily driver. Should be easy to spot in traffic.



Ian Callum is thriving at his eponymous design works. Skye is nearly ready to roll

TUESDAY

An evening we look forward to all year, the Autocar Awards, where we get to honour the car industry's highest achievers. This year's event was in the grand surroundings of 10-11 Carlton House Terrace, a big place just off Pall Mall, once prime minister William Gladstone's homestead. It has recently featured in movies that required such surroundings, one of them a Bond production. You'll have read last week (I hope) about the remarkable list of luminaries who came. The buzz of their company will live with me for a long time.

The highlights were an extremely animated conversation with designer François Leboine – amazingly, the creator (with teams, he insists) of both the Renault 5 and the Fiat Grande Panda. Also the revelation by McLaren Formula 1's Piers Thynne that, as curator of the firm's heritage collection, he recently discovered the chassis of a McLaren M23 – a James Hunt-era car – under a sheet, undisturbed for years. Thynne tasked McLaren's apprentices with building a running car, and it will be seen in action at the Goodwood Festival of Speed next month.

Is this your pick-up? Do Steve a favour and charge the battery, thanks

> **"He learned about his boss's departure no earlier than us"**

WEDNESDAY

Oh dear. Another email from Mercedes-Benz customer services telling me that the battery in the excellent and thoroughly enjoyable 68-plate Mercedes X-Class pick-up I ran seven years ago has reached a critical state of charge and soon won't start the car. Back in the day, I signed up to an app that connected the mighty white load carrier to Merc Central, and I can't seem to disengage myself. I wish the present owner would charge the damned battery and save me from the warning emails. As I remember it, the vehicle definitely deserves a bit of love.

FRIDAY

Dinner in King's Cross, London, with Renault's long-serving (16 years and counting) VP of design, Laurens van den Acker. I was with a group of other scribblers: the hacking tendency loves Laurens, and if the quality and length of his discourse are anything to go by, he quite likes us. Interesting to hear that he had learned about Renault chief Luca de Meo's departure to luxury goods brand Kering no earlier than we did.

LVDA's career achievements are enormous: I remember talking off-record with the head of a rival multinational about potential ways of fixing his company's problematic design. "Can you let me have Laurens' number?" he enquired. I never had the courage to ask if van den Acker actually got the call.

AND ANOTHER THING

So sorry to hear of the retirement from BTCC TV commentary of Steve Rider, forever famous for Saturday appearances on BBC Grandstand. He's a brilliant operator and a top bloke: I interviewed him at Thruxton once and witnessed his kindness to little kids who wanted to be in his orbit for a bit. I'm hoping he'll still EmCee the odd live event. Watching his relaxed control is an education.

GET IN TOUCH
steve.cropley@haymarket.com

Matt Prior

I'd be a hopeless sports coach. I don't just suspect that's the case, I fairly well know it, having spent a season 'managing' the Pear & Partridge FC, my local pub's football team, 20 years ago. Other than a notable 5-4 victory after being 4-0 down at half-time (local newspaper headline: 'Lovely Pear For Comeback Kings' – and yes, I wrote the match report), it wasn't a spell that had Arsène Wenger looking nervously over his shoulder.

In partial mitigation, it wasn't unknown for the Pear's star striker to arrive for the match on a Sunday morning with a can of lager in his hand – whether still going strong from the night before or starting afresh that morning, I never quite knew. It wasn't the training or the tactics or team selection that bothered me – these were not high-stakes games – but the stress of watching and hoping. It found it unbearable.

I get the same feeling when I drop a vehicle in for its MOT test. Last week it was my motorcycle, but a couple of months ago it was my Audi A2. You can check a vehicle's MOT status online, so at some point during the hour or two my local garage had the car, the gov.uk website asked me to confirm I'm a human because I had refreshed the page so much to check up on the Audi that the system thought I was some kind of spambot.

The nervousness, the anticipation, the feeling of dread. I hate it all. It doesn't matter how much prep or homework I've done: one of my vehicles is going in to be judged and I don't know what the outcome will be. It's the motoring equivalent of Schrödinger's cat. I don't get the same feeling from the family Land Rover, because I don't do any of the work on it. So it must be something about the feeling of being personally assessed.

What's weird is that it doesn't really matter: whatever is wrong I can just take home and fix.

Can you guess what it is yet? Or was that from a different TV show?

My job requires that I drive things, so there's usually a car around if I need to go somewhere. But knowing that doesn't seem to help. I like owning, working on and using old vehicles. But there are a few hours every year when I think about swapping them for something new – a car or bike I wouldn't technically own but whose problems wouldn't belong to me either.

GAMBLE AWARE

I'm told a television programme called You Bet! still exists, which some of you might remember from the 1980s, while some others among you might not quite believe existed.

A contestant would come on – a scientist, perhaps – and tell a panel of celebrity judges that they reckoned they could do something unlikely, like tell the temperature of a jug of water to within half a degree centigrade, perhaps even more accurately, by dipping their nose in it. I'm fairly certain that example actually happened and I'm not making it up. The judges would then bet on whether said feat was possible or not. You would have thought not for that specific example, but from memory I think you would have been wrong. And so the show went on.

> **"Another expert has said there will only be a few car brands left"**

Two other examples stir my memory. Someone identifying cars from just their wheel or hubcap design. I think I stood a pretty good chance of getting most of those right at the time. And someone who thought they could tell you what any product was just from its barcode.

Barcodes must have been a fairly new thing at the time. "That's Whiskas cat food, chicken flavour," might have been possible in the late 1980s, but surely it wouldn't be now, would it? And likewise the proliferation of wheels and wheel designs means that I'd still have more chance of identifying one from then than now.

Anyway, I mention now because I read the other day another industry expert saying that in a few years there would only be a handful of brands still making cars. That the big companies would otherwise have eaten or killed the little companies and you'll be able to count the remaining ones on two hands.

Over the past 40 years I think I've heard that argument more times than I can count on two hands, and I'm still not sure it's true. Not all of today's car companies will survive, I'm sure, and I can imagine even some big ones being bought or running out of cash. But there are more people in the world with the money to buy a car than ever. I'd rather predict the number of wheel designs I can spot than the number of car companies that will live on.

GET IN TOUCH
matthew.prior@haymarket.com

If you service and repair your own cars, MOT time is like handing in your homework

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RACING LINES

Damien Smith

Race two winner Ash Sutton leads race one podium man Chris Smiley at Oulton Park

One minute we were rubbing in the sun cream, the next hunkering under brollies as the good old UK weather kept the British Touring Car Championship guessing at bucolic Oulton Park. The series' annual excursion to the Cheshire circuit signalled the season's halfway mark, and as usual a huge crowd descended ahead of the July summer break.

Title rivals Tom Ingram and Ash Sutton scored a win apiece, the latter after cannily giving up third place in the opener to ensure he started the second race with a soft Goodyear tyre advantage – which then worked a treat. But as it so often does, the BTCC left the best to last, with an action-packed reverse-grid race that was won by 46-year-old Gordon Shedden. Up to this point, the three-time champion had struggled for air in his comeback season after a two-year break. Yes, he inherited pole position for the 'lottery' race, but following a pre-race rain dump the Scot showed he's still got the chops with a perfectly measured drive, as a degree of chaos played out in his wake that left the sodden crowd gasping and groaning. The BTCC is always a fun day out – even if it's at times a mite drier watching it on TV.

RIDER'S LAST RIDE

Speaking of which, when the series returns at Croft early next month for the season's second half, there will be a significant absence from our screens. Oulton marked Steve Rider's final weekend as one of British sport's greatest broadcasters as the 75-year-old took his final bow. A smooth and assuring presence on our screens since the halcyon days of BBC Grandstand, no one has made talking about live sport on the telly look so easy – when it really isn't. Equally at home on a golf course or in a football stadium, Rider's most significant personal passion has always been motor racing – and his contribution has been immense. A true and knowledgeable enthusiast, he played a key role in making the BTCC a Grandstand staple in the late 1980s and through the Super Touring boom years, when Murray Walker's trousers-on-fire commentary helped create TV gold. ITV's excellent coverage will roll on without him, of course, but Steve – it cannot be the same without you. Thanks for always being there.

> "Steve Rider's passion has always been motor racing"

KNOCKOUT PUNCH AT THE 'RING

Controversy at the Nürburgring 24 Hours last month. Crack Porsche GT team Manthey appeared to have scored its second twice-round-the-clock win in a week in the wake of its LMGT3 class success at Le Mans, only for its 911 GT3 R to be handed a 100-second penalty that passed victory to Rowe Racing's BMW M4 GT3 Evo. Fresh from chasing Robert Kubica to a close second overall at Le Mans in a Penske-run 963, Kévin Estre led the Manthey charge at the 'Ring, only to clobber a Dörr-run Aston Martin Vantage GT4 as he attempted to lap it. The Aston was launched into a roll from which driver Rolf Scheibner thankfully emerged unscathed.

Estre put up an impassioned defence for the unintentional collision, but the penalty was the right call. Closing speeds between the top GT3s and those in the slower classes at the classic Nordschleife event have always been part of the jeopardy, but with more at stake in by far the race's most competitive era, such an outcome was all too predictable. A time penalty is a messy and unsatisfactory way for a race result to be decided, but it would have left a worse taste had Manthey kept its win.

Ticktum returned to form with a Formula E win in Jakarta

TICKTUM FINALLY WINS

"A lot of people forget I used to be quite handy on the Formula 1 ladder, and now I'm going to start proving it again," said a vindicated Dan Ticktum following his first Formula E victory after nearly four years and 60 races without one. The 26-year-old scored at the Jakarta street race for the Cupra Kiro team, which last won under a different guise in the electric single-seater series' first season more than 10 years ago. Formula E has its haters, but it continues to throw up unpredictable results from eventful motor races.

Okay, Ticktum needed a dose of luck – here in the form of the demise of Nyck de Vries, who had earlier swiped the nose of Jake Dennis's Andretti entry having taken the lead. But still, the new winner put in a measured and mature performance. Ticktum isn't everyone's cup of tea, to put it mildly. Best known (sadly) for receiving a two-year ban early in his career for driving a rival off the track under a safety car, Ticktum sometimes seems a little too willing to play up to his 'bad boy' image. Outspoken, albeit with the ability to turn an eloquent phrase, Ticktum is also a significant talent – as he was quick to point out post-race in Indonesia. From now on, perhaps we will see the best of him.

YOUR VIEWS

WRITE TO autocar@haymarket.com

A BLIND BIT OF NOTICE

I raised an eyebrow at your comment in the Dacia Bigster road test (11 June) that it had neither a rev counter nor blindspot indication, as I would expect your test car to feature the same kit as the Duster.

My 2025 Duster 4x4's dashboard can easily be configured to include a ribbon-style rev counter. On delivery, my car seemed to have no blindspot feature, contrary to what the handbook PDF claimed. The dealer suggested it only worked if the indicator was in use, which sounded nonsensical. A minute spent fiddling with the settings resulted in engagement of a conventional blindspot indicator.

Odd, really, as the blindspot feature is almost the only useful ADAS device. Why have the default setting as 'off' when the rest of the ADAS nonsense has to be switched off before every trip? At least it's easy to do so.

Nice car, by the way.

John Aston
Thirsk, North Yorkshire

Our Bigster definitely didn't have a rev counter because it was a full hybrid; the mild-hybrid Duster does indeed have one, so I presume the mild-hybrid Bigster will do as well. Sorry for the error regarding blindspot detection: it is indeed standard on the Bigster – IV

SHOOT TO THRILL

I thoroughly enjoyed the off-road battle between the Land Rover Defender Octa, Ford Mustang Mach-E Rally and Ariel Nomad 2 ('Looking for rubble', 11 June.)

Great action photography by Max Edleston, too! One photo in particular, of the Octa and Nomad driving along the dirt track side by side, made the Ariel look just like a Tamiya radio-controlled model car.

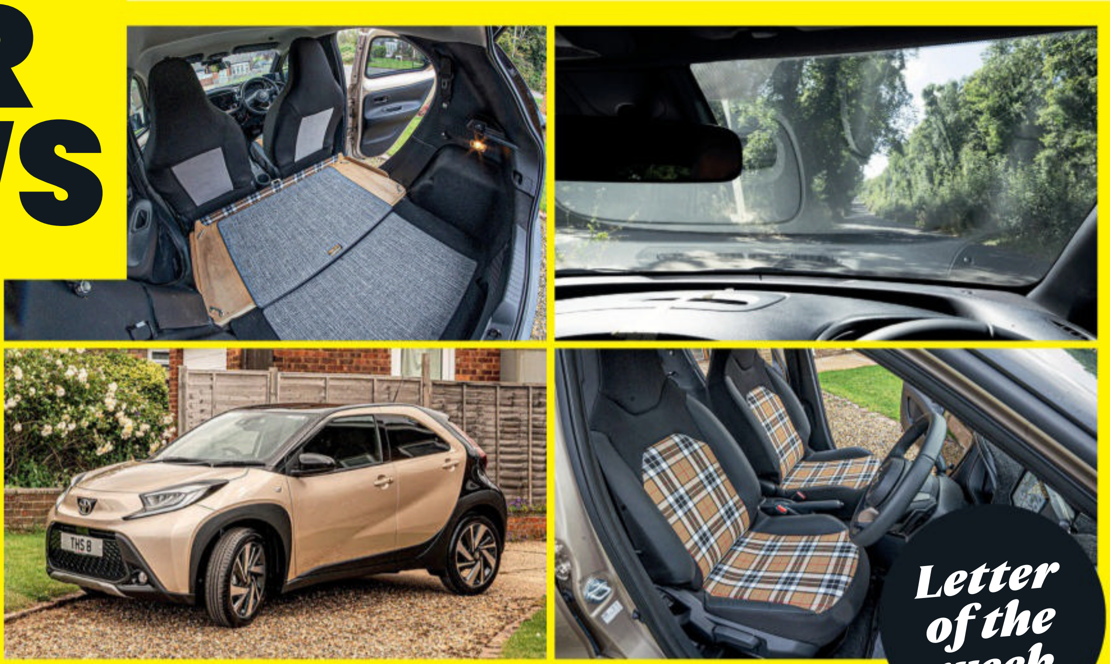
The contrast between them is extraordinary – and accounts for their hugely different driving experiences, of course.

Ian Barclay
Angmering, West Sussex

HOLDING OUT FOR A NIRO

Tim Kingswell said that shockingly the parts for his mother's Kia EV3 won't be available for "at least a few months" (11 June). Good luck with that: Kia have had my wife's Niro EV since September 2024. We were told it should take three months for the battery repair; nine months on and we still have no date for when they will even start working on it.

Keith Stenhouse
Via email



Letter of the week

PERFECTING MY LITTLE CAR

With two vintage Rolls-Royces, four Land Rovers, a Jeep, a Mercedes G-Wagen and several decades of Sahara exploration trips behind me, it was time to stow the jerry cans and hang up the shovels. A sensible little car beckoned with sensible MPG and no sand on the seat sliders. Toyota's reputation for rock-solid engineering loomed large on my logic landscape and just over a year ago my rushed selection criteria clicked on an Aygo X.

I was startled by the plethora of auto this and auto that in the cockpit, but the sweet automatic transmission, the engine stop-start system and the sweetness of operation won the day. A wide-eyed look at the immaculate assembly of hardware under the bonnet clinched the deal.

As delivered, the sepulchral all-black interior was a disappointment, and the instrument layout was of matching Stygian gloom. As a beginning, a pale grey headlining was obtained and installed. Then the front seats received the attention of a competent retrimmer. The cockpit was starting to look more inviting.

The extravagant rear seats, crammed into the back, seemed designed to accommodate and restrain a pair of sumo wrestlers. They were removed altogether, brightening the interior dramatically and providing space for me to execute a two-seat flatbed micro-pick-up conversion of astonishingly prolific utility.

Once moving, an alarming issue on bright, sunny days was reflection off the light-coloured dash. Bright sunshine produces dark shadow, and dark shadow is where tired cyclists pause for a breather. A totally non-reflective, deep-pile, black fabric was found and used to cover the dash.

Fate was having an obstreperous heyday, and I was soon smitten with sat-nav errors. No acknowledgment or remedy of the issue came from either the selling agent or my local agent for four months, despite letters to the notional Toyota head office. Only roping in the 'advisors' at Which? saw the Aygo back at the supplier for a change of the sat-nav module. This is now ingeniously, ergonomically and impressively functional.

Going backwards, the car proved effective at knocking my garden wall down. My error, but that first night run exposed the limitations of an inadequate reversing light, not helped by it being part-covered by a blue-grey plastic protection film. This was addressed by fitting a ReverSee LED light bar above the rear numberplate.

The Aygo X, driving as neatly and economically (circa 45-50mpg on short runs) as ever and as it should, but now functionally reset to more acceptable ergonomic and safety standards, is now a delight – and the simple, practical utility it should be. A credit to the engineers who put the shell and hardware together but arguably not reflecting well on the interior designers, ergonomics folk or post-purchase support.

Tom Sheppard, Offley, Hertfordshire

For David, cars never got more exciting than this

Octa meets Nomad. All products shown to scale

ONE FORMER LITTLE TIKE

On reading Matt Prior's comments about the Little Tikes Cozy Coupe toy car (Prior Conviction, 11 June), I suddenly felt a strong pang of nostalgia.

Over the years, I've been a bit of a petrolhead. I've owned two Triumph Spitfires, an MGB, two TVR Chimaeras, a Mercedes CLK 320, two Mercedes SLs, a Dax Cobra replica (built by DB Replicas) with a 500bhp Chevy V8, a Mercedes C300 Cabriolet and a host of hot saloons.

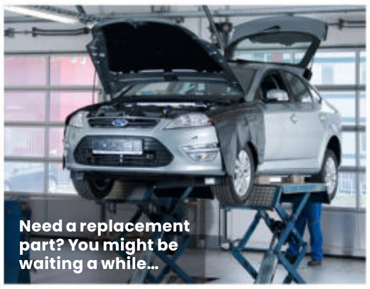
I will be 80 in November, and my biggest affection was (and still is) for my first car, when I was seven years old: an Austin J40 pedal car in blue.

These are still 'raced' around Goodwood each year. The best examples cost a small fortune. Unfortunately, like all my nice cars, I wish I had kept it.

Thank you for the memory-jogger, Matt.

David Allen-Butler
Wittersham, Kent

GETTY IMAGES


Need a replacement part? You might be waiting a while...

X TO THE POWER OF 3

I'm used to seeing questionable numbers relating to EV range, but Greg Kable's first drive of a BMW iX3 prototype (11 June) confused me further. If the range is 497 miles, up by 210 miles on the old model, then that is an increase of 73% over 287 miles, not the 30% stated.

Nick Tiley
Cambridge

You're quite right. Apologies – GK

A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY

It's not often I write to complain, but I must do so about Ford parts availability... or rather the lack of it.

We've been Ford customers for many years now, owning a variety of models. A lot of this has been due to our excellent local Ford dealer. Sadly of late, I find myself thinking that these may be our last, due to the very poor parts availability.

We currently have a 2022 Galaxy and a 2017 Edge. Both terrific cars, but we're being let down by parts availability. In April, my wife had a mishap in the Galaxy and damaged the nearside front and rear doors. After waiting for nearly a month for the Galaxy to go in for repair on 16 May, we still haven't had it back. The reason, I'm told, is that the repairer can't obtain a wiring loom for the rear door.

It was the same when the hybrid battery failed earlier in the year: we had to wait more than 10 days for a replacement. And when my Edge had a leaking fuel pipe last year, I had to wait five weeks for my local dealer to obtain one.

What is going on with Ford? We never used to have these parts supply problems. I suspect these may be our last Fords, based on this situation, if every time something out of the ordinary is needed we have to wait several days or weeks for parts. I'm very dissatisfied.

Paul Williams
Via email

This is an issue affecting many brands. See the news pages in our 14 May issue for more – KC

Weekly winner

Letter of the week wins this ValetPro exterior protection and maintenance kit worth £48

GREAT REASONS TO BUY

Next week's issue

ON SALE 9 JULY

FEATURE

MOOR, MOOR, MOOR

We go thrill-seeking in the latest Mini John Cooper Works hot hatch over some of the best moorland roads that Yorkshire has to offer

INSIGHT

THE OTHER CARS IN FORMULA 1

The story of Aston Martin's safety and medical cars and their vital roles

ROAD TEST

AUDI RS3 SPORTBACK

Updated hot hatch gives 2.5-litre five-cylinder engine its last hurrah

EVERY WEEK

USED GUIDE

JAGUAR XF

Yes, you can still get a likeable Jag – and this one could cost you as little as £4000

LIVING WITH A...

VOLVO EX30

We've previously criticised this electric crossover's tech, so how will it fare on our fleet?

CONTENTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

AUTOCAR

The original car magazine, published since 1895 'in the interests of the mechanically propelled road carriage'

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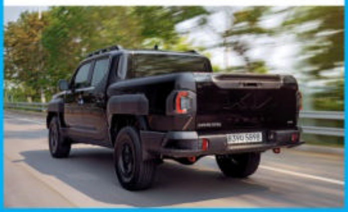
THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS



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HOW WE TEST CARS

Autocar delivers several kinds of reviews on new cars, with different levels of technical and functional scrutiny. As the name suggests, our First Drives section typically addresses cars that we're driving for the first time – either in final production form or as late prototypes. Time in the car can be limited here, technical and equipment specification might not be finalised and some systems software may not be to production specification. For those reasons, First Drive reports don't have star ratings.

Once we have driven a car for a second time in the UK, in right-hand-drive form and typically at greater length, we will rate it, either as part of a shorter UK test report or as the subject of a full, instrumented Road Test.

In the latter case, we take empirical performance and refinement benchmarks from it at Horiba MIRA proving ground, as well as subjective limit handling impressions, plus key measurements of practicality, efficiency and kerb weight.

All UK tests and Road Tests receive proper verdicts with star ratings informed by everything we have learned and the combined impressions and experience of several testers.

FIRST DRIVES

TESTED 18.6.25, LOMBARDY, ITALY **DELIVERIES** NOW

MERCEDES-AMG PURESPEED

Limited-run take on the SL 63 is a breath of fresh air

There are few better ways to test a car's sense of theatre than by throwing it straight into the Mille Miglia – and we're part of it. Not in a priceless museum piece, but in the wildest, most extroverted Mercedes-AMG SL 63 yet conceived and built: the Purespeed.

To be fair, this is less a first drive verdict and more an event – the kind you dress for. But the luxury speedster, production of which is limited to 250 units, is perhaps as exciting to drive as any road-going Mercedes-AMG has ever been.

Visually, it's striking. There's no windscreen or side windows, just small licks of glass to channel airflow to the right places. The hollow steel halo that dominates the styling – a proper structural item inspired by the latest F1 tech – sits directly in your peripheral vision, giving the Purespeed a unique feel from behind the wheel.

The standard SL's fabric roof is gone, replaced by angular cowls behind each seat. The shark-nose front end is also new; the splitter, winged sills and large diffuser are likewise more aggressive in design. Bespoke 21in wheels, open at the front for brake cooling but all but closed at the rear for aerodynamic efficiency, complete the look with specially developed 275/35 front and 305/30 rear Michelin Pilot Sports.

The windscreen-less Purespeed isn't something you jump into casually for a quick blast: it demands a helmet not for style but for survival over any distance. Even at modest speeds in town, the air blasts into the cabin; once you're past 100mph it gets physical, and the buffeting is strong enough to blur your vision. The commitment required to keep it pinned at higher speeds makes every mile feel earned: the stream of air roars so loudly that even the V8 up front begins to fade into the background.

In other respects the hand-built engine remains one of the key attractions. It's the same twin-turbo 4.0-litre unit used in the standard SL 63 with 577bhp and 590lb ft, backed by AMG's nine-speed MCT automatic gearbox and a fully variable 4Matic+ four-wheel drive system with a distinct rear bias.

Throttle response is a key strength, the torque delivery is colossal and the shifts, whether you're pulling paddles or leaving it to decide for itself, are quick and

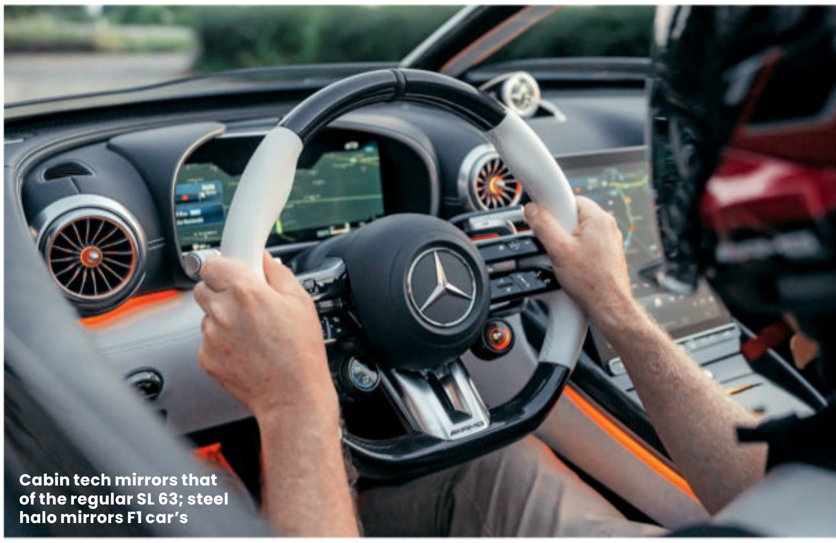
Lack of windscreen means helmet is essential. Best pack some earplugs, too

TESTER'S NOTE

The Purespeed is a physical car to drive, not because of the control weightings or such, but because of the relentless buffeting of air and the resulting wind roar you experience at speed over longer distances. In summery conditions with a helmet on, it's like a sauna, too. All part and parcel of the fun, though. **GK**

Active underbody aero adds downforce at speed in sporty drive modes

> **"It isn't intimidating, but the Purespeed doesn't hand-hold"**



Cabin tech mirrors that of the regular SL 63; steel halo mirrors F1 car's

clean. It feels properly fast. Out on the rural stretches of the Mille Miglia route between Mantua and Ferrara, the Purespeed doesn't need asking twice.

Yet even with the noise turned up in the more aggressive driving modes, the signature exhaust bark so central to the AMG experience is dulled by the continuous rush of air. There's an intercom that lets you talk to your passenger, so why not route some engine noise through it for those moments when you want the theatre in your ears?

Same goes for the navigation system. You can dial up the map and direction pointers into the instrument display – placing them nicely in your field of vision – but there's no option to pipe the guidance into your helmet. That's a detail AMG will need to sort.

Still, it's hard to argue with the way this SL drives. Despite the long nose and wide footprint, the Purespeed never feels unwieldy. There's smoothness and precision to the steering, while the rear-wheel steering helps to rotate the car quickly and cleanly into tight bends.

There's real fluidity to its actions over the more challenging Mille Miglia back roads. The chassis remains composed over camber shifts or surface changes mid-corner, and traction and grip are strong. The inherent balance, aided by a slightly lower centre of gravity than the standard SL, makes it feel lighter and a lot more agile than its 1970kg kerb weight suggests.

An underbody carbonfibre active aero element reacts to AMG drive modes, lowering by 40mm at speed to create a venturi effect, improving steering response and stability. It's paired with underbody extensions adapted from the AMG GT 63 Pro and a front-axle lift system to protect the body over speed bumps.

The breadth of driving character is shaped by the nuanced tuning of the adaptive AMG Ride Control, a combination of double wishbones up front and multi-links at the rear. From Comfort through Sport and right up to Race, there's a distinct shift in throttle and damping response, steering weight, gearbox sharpness and exhaust tuning. In its softest setting, the car rides with a surprising degree of suppleness, even over coarse and broken Italian bitumen, yet you can stiffen it dramatically when you want.

You can loosen the electronic safety net with a flick of the rotary dial on the steering wheel, and the Purespeed will oblige if you treat it with finesse: it's not intimidating, but it doesn't hand-hold. This is still a roofless missile, capable of blasting to 62mph in 3.6sec and, so it's claimed, run to 196mph flat out.

Inside it's still recognisably an SL, but with subtle changes. The rear seats have been turned into storage space for the helmets and intercom, while the detailing is sharp and the perceived quality is high. AMG knows how to design a cabin to feel expensive, and it works well here, even if you spend most of your time gripping the wheel, helmet pressed into the headrest, wondering how it's legal to drive something like this at speed. And yes, it does have a boot, with up to 213 litres of space.

Then there's the price: €775,000 (around £661,000) plus tax. At more than four times that of a regular SL 63, it's hard to make a case for the Purespeed. It's a car you would only consider driving in the dry – a car of commitment, built for maximum drama and designed to provoke. Forget the usual benchmarks: you judge this car by the reaction it gets and the way it makes you feel after a rapid 50 miles with your visor down and your senses lit up.

On the 2025 Mille Miglia, surrounded by classic machines with real racing pedigree, you would think the Purespeed might feel out of place. It doesn't. It draws the same glances, triggers the same grins and gets the same signal from the crowd: an enthusiastic 'Forza'.

GREG KABLE

TECH SPEC

MERCEDES-AMG PURESPEED

Roofless and expensive luxury speedster built for drama and performance is an unforgettable take on open-air driving

Price €775,000 (£661,000), plus tax
Engine V8, 3982cc, twin-turbo, petrol
Power 577bhp at 5500rpm
Torque 590lb ft at 2500rpm
Gearbox 9-spd automatic, 4WD
Kerb weight 1970kg
0-62mph 3.6sec
Top speed 196mph
Economy 20.6mpg
CO_2, tax band 312g/km, 37%
Rivals Aston Martin V12 Speedster, Ferrari Monza SP2

KwikFit BTCC
BRITISH TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP

MEDIA PARTNER
AUTOCAR
itv SPORT

WATCH EVERY RACE LIVE ACROSS ITV4

OultonPark
Esso
KwikFit
GOODYEAR
Vertu
Valvoline
NAPA
LKQ
NORLIN
VALVOLINE

NEXT RACE 2–3 AUGUST, CROFT

IT'S GONNA BE A SCORCHER

VISIT BTCC.NET FOR FULL DETAILS

TESTER'S NOTE Kia put the Tasman through 1777 specific durability tests around the world during development, over more than 18,000 evaluation cycles. **MT**

TESTED 29.5.25, SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA **DELIVERIES** NOW (SELECTED MARKETS)

KIA TASMAN

Diversifying Korean firm offers Aussie pick-up drivers 'new dog, old tricks'

Forbidden fruit in the car industry comes in all shapes and sizes. The latest is the Kia Tasman, the brand's first-ever pick-up truck.

While it would be easy to ignore such a development, given that the Tasman is denied not only to Brits but also Europeans and Americans, it is significant in showing how Kia is continuing to develop and enter new markets and model segments.

In short, Kia is a brand willing and able to try new things and the Tasman is a fantastic bit of design. If you look around at the Tasman's rivals (Ford Ranger, Toyota Hilux, Nissan Navara), you would think there wasn't much one could do to make a pick-up visually interesting before you start getting to performance versions like the Ranger Raptor. Yet the Tasman is one your eyes are drawn to. It looks like it means business.

Kia has packed the spec sheet too: it claims true go-anywhere ability and best-in-class strength from an all-new body-on-frame platform.

There's double-wishbone front suspension, high-mounted to better protect from corrosion and offer improved ground clearance. At the rear is a rigid axle with leaf springs.

The Tasman has switchable high- and low-speed four-wheel-drive plus automatic four-wheel-drive and rear-wheel-drive modes. An electric locking differential is in charge of torque distribution on uneven surfaces and there are several terrain modes, including Desert for Middle Eastern and African buyers.

The four-cylinder engine options include a 277bhp, 311lb ft 2.5-litre petrol and a 207bhp, 325lb ft 2.2-litre diesel, depending on the market. An eight-speed automatic gearbox is offered on both and a six-speed manual on the diesel. I tested the petrol and found it had plenty of torque and a nice relaxed style.

Other key parts of the powertrain and exhaust are also mounted high to help afford a wading depth of 800mm. The respective approach, departure and breakover angles are 33.2deg, 26.2deg and 25.8deg, while the payload is 1151kg (including cabin loads) and towing capacity 3500kg. Kia claims the bed has a best-in-class capacity of 1212 litres.

While I couldn't test the Tasman's off-road credentials on this short taster drive, I did drive it on public roads. Kia is talking up SUV levels of ride comfort in the Tasman, thanks to the likes of urethane bump stops and frequency-sensitive valves in the shock absorbers.

It's generally good and has plenty of wheel travel in particular and more sophistication than most rivals, but it can't ever fully cheat the limitations of body-on-frame construction, so to call it car-like is pushing things slightly.

Otherwise, it steers and handles like a modern pick-up, which means you have to respect its size and speed of response. Still, it doesn't require anywhere near as much adjustment from driving a car as in days past. One corner and you will have worked out that it's not nearly as intimidating to drive as you might have expected.

The best bit about the Tasman, which is initially offered in dual-cab form with a single cab to come, is the interior. Here you really could be in a top-end SUV. The material quality is superb and, while there are familiar parts from Kia's cars, like the dual-screen dashboard display, there are plenty of Tasman-specific features that give it its own character. These include sturdy grab handles in all the right places, some of the best interior door handles you will ever use (very expensive-feeling but oh so robust) and clever little usability touches like the Tasman's dimensions and key off-roading stats displayed on a graphic on the centre console. Great seat comfort, too. The only real concern would be getting it dirty and covered in sand.

Kia is a company exuding confidence at the moment, and again it shows in the Tasman. This isn't another me-too pick-up, rather an interesting addition to the segment in its own right. Given it's already being made in right-hand drive for Australia, it's a shame the Tasman won't be offered here.

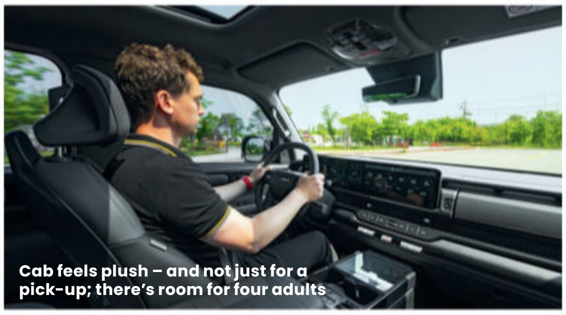
MARK TISSHAW

TECH SPEC

KIA TASMAN 2.5 T-GDi X-PRO

A great design inside and out that's decent to drive too. An interesting next step in Kia's evolution

Price AUD $74,990 (£35,700)
Engine 4 cyls in line, 2497cc, turbo, petrol
Power 277bhp at 5800rpm
Torque 311lb ft at 1700-4000rpm
Gearbox 8-spd automatic, 4WD
Kerb weight 2237kg
0-62mph 8.5sec
Top speed 115mph
Economy na
CO_2, tax band na
Rivals Ford Ranger, Toyota Hilux



Cab feels plush – and not just for a pick-up; there's room for four adults

The ride is more sophisticated than most rival trucks serve up

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UK VERDICTS

TESTED 13.6.25, OXFORDSHIRE **DELIVERIES** NOW

SUZUKI SWIFT ALLGRIP

Charming supermini ups its abilities with all-wheel-drive option

The Fiat Panda 4x4 is an unlikely cult hero. A small hatchback is never going to have the ground clearance for hardcore off-roading, nor the torque to be a capable tow vehicle. And yet its pluckiness makes it really quite endearing.

The most intrepid of Pandas is currently on hiatus while a four-wheel-drive version of the new hybrid Grande Panda is being readied, but for decades there has been a lesser-known alternative: the four-wheel-drive Suzuki Swift, which these days is called 'Allgrip'.

Every Swift has the same mild-hybrid, naturally aspirated 1.2-litre three-cylinder petrol engine with 81bhp, and a five-speed manual gearbox is standard. A CVT is available, but only on the front-wheel-drive version.

The Allgrip has a relatively simple four-wheel drive system, with a viscous coupling that closes up when there's enough of a speed differential between the two axles (such as when the front wheels are spinning). It's a purely mechanical system, rather than one that uses electronically controlled clutch packs. You won't find a drift mode on the Swift Allgrip, then, but it should stay reliable for a long time.

One reason why the Swift Allgrip doesn't carry the same clout as the Panda 4x4 is that the Swift doesn't shout about its driven rear axle – there aren't even any Allgrip badges. Of course, the keen spotter always knows, because, just like a Ferrari 288 GTO or McLaren Artura, the Swift Allgrip has a differential peeking out from its rear bumper. You might also notice its India-spec ride height, which gives the Allgrip a little more off-roadability by increasing the ground clearance from 115mm to 140mm. Rear suspension is still a torsion beam, so don't expect the axle articulation of a Jeep Wrangler – or even the old Ignis, which had a diddy live axle.

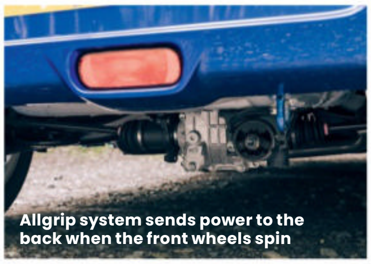
On the road, the Allgrip still drives like a Swift, which is mostly delightful. Despite a shorter final drive and shorter fourth and fifth gears, it's even slower than the standard one, adding 1.1sec to the 0-62mph time. I rarely found myself upshifting before 4500rpm, and maintaining 70mph on a steep incline sometimes requires a downshift. But the zingy, revvy engine and the snappy manual 'box makes it all quite good fun. Even when thrashing the living daylights out of the engine, it still returns 55mpg, which is less than the 60mpg you can expect from the front-wheel-drive Swift but still far from profligate.

It also remains enjoyable on open roads. The ride is slightly busier than a standard Swift's but still pretty absorbent by cheap car standards, and as soon as you turn into a corner, you can feel that this is a light car (1037kg rather than the standard 949kg). Despite very ordinary tyres, it turns in and hangs on very well. Again, it's just fun.

I didn't get to take it on a proper off-road course, but the Allgrip negotiated some light green-laning without issue. It is worth noting that because this system waits for wheelspin at the front before sending power to the back, it will never have the traction of something that can be locked into four-wheel drive.

A four-wheel-drive supermini is a very niche proposition, and most buyers in the UK will have no use for it. But if you live in an Alpine village with tight streets, or somewhere remote that gets snow and is accessed by narrow lanes, this car makes a lot of sense.

ILLYA VERPRAET



Allgrip system sends power to the back when the front wheels spin

Interior mirrors the standard Swift, as do the engine and gearbox

TECH SPEC

SUZUKI SWIFT ALLGRIP ULTRA

A niche proposition done well. You'll know if you need one. If you don't, you're better off with a normal Swift

★★★★☆

Price £22,049
Engine 3 cyls in line, 1197cc, petrol, plus 12V ISG
Power 81bhp at 5700rpm
Torque 83lb ft at 4500rpm
Gearbox 5-spd manual, 4WD
Kerb weight 1037kg
0-62mph 13.6sec
Top speed 99mph
Economy 57.6mpg
CO$_2$, tax band 110g/km, 28%
Rivals Fiat Grande Panda 4x4, Dacia Duster 4x4

TESTER'S NOTE

Our Swift long-termer (see p58) has a slightly musty, wet-dog smell inside. I thought this was due to photographers and videographers getting into it after rain-soaked shoots, but this freshly valeted one was exactly the same. I prefer it to the aggressively chemical smell of many Chinese cars, though. **IV**

The Swift Allgrip isn't fast, but it's agile, grippy and fun to thrash around

“Drive the Electrified G80 and you’ll soon view it as a considerable bargain”

TESTED 25.6.25, SURREY **DELIVERIES** JULY

GENESIS ELECTRIFIED G80

Updated electric flagship gets a longer wheelbase and greater range

For the first five yards of my test of the latest Genesis Electrified G80, the Korean marque’s EV flagship now offered with a bigger battery and a longer wheelbase, I wasn’t even behind the wheel.

The car was tightly parked between two others, so we rolled it forwards to an accessible position by controlling it purely on the key. It’s simple; with practice you can even parallel park the G80 into a space it chooses. It’s a big car, and fairly wide, so it’s easy to see this capability working well for some owners, especially those with tight-fitting garages at home.

Remote parking is just one of a significant number of comprehensively rethought features in the Electrified G80 (as its maker cumbersomely chooses to call it). This time last year the car seemed to be heading for the exit door; Genesis would only sell it to special order. This was not a sign of the model being ditched, though, but that an improved 2025 edition was coming – for sale through the Hyundai dealers Genesis has now decided to adopt.

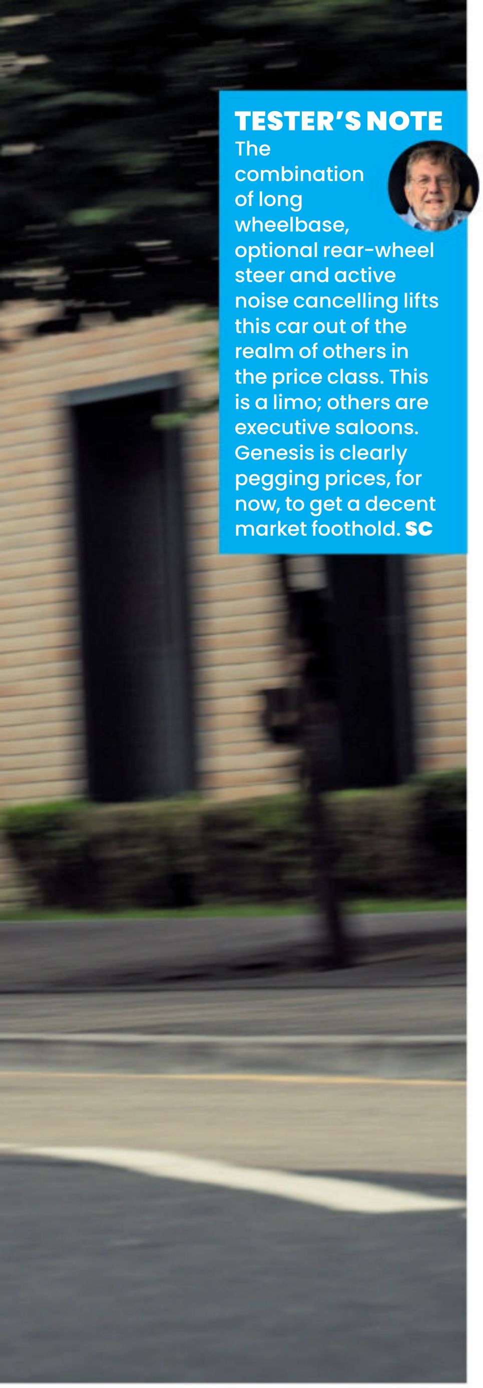
The G80 EV has always started behind scratch against its rivals because it is based on a model that was packaged for ICE power. That meant it lacked the handy frunk of others, its driving position was compromised by a big drive battery beneath the floor and its boot was almost comically tiny because more electrics intruded.

In the latest model, Genesis has attacked every problem except the boot (there’s evidently nothing to be done about that) – and the result is an excellent luxury saloon.

Starting with the big stuff, the G80 gets 130mm of extra wheelbase, all of which is to the benefit of rear-seat passengers. The rear doors, roughly five inches longer, suit the car’s proportions well and the already decent rear knee room is now massive.

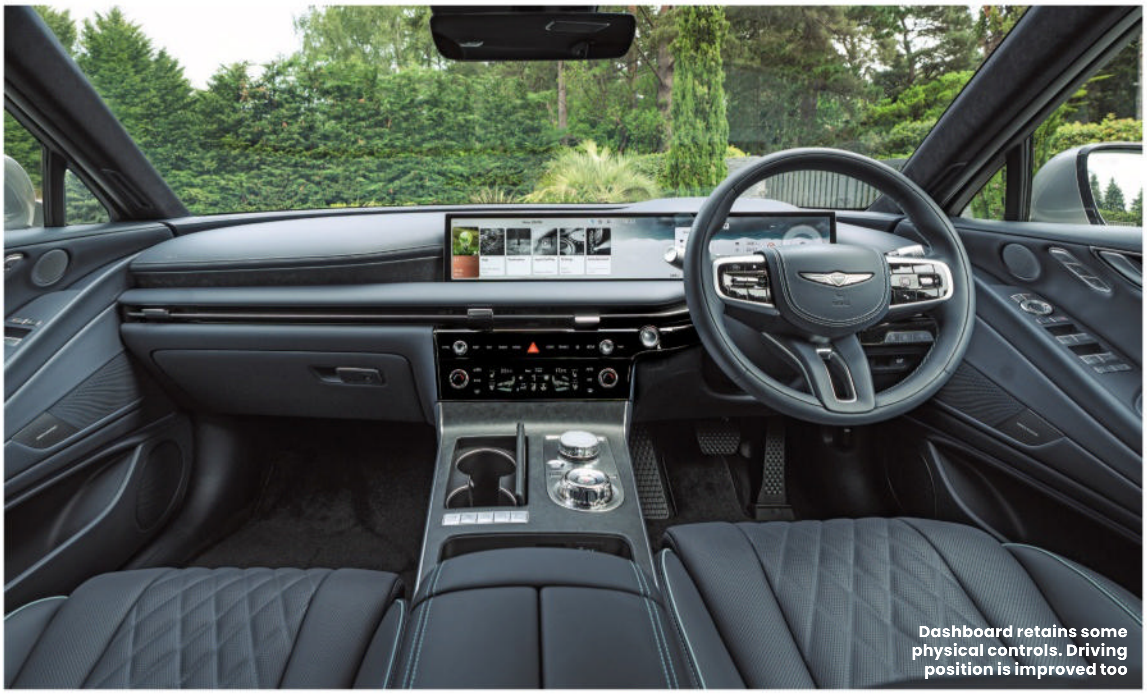
Beneath the car is a lithium ion battery pack whose total capacity rises by 8.6% to 94.5kWh, a move that boosts the WLTP range from 323 miles to 354 miles. Autocar ran a previous battery G80 for six months, during which time the claimed touring range proved realistic except in darkest winter, and even then it was decent. Maximum charge speed is now 187kW, at which rate a boost from 10-80%, which adds 250 miles, takes

Stylish G80 saloon wears its wheelbase extension well



TESTER'S NOTE

The combination of long wheelbase, optional rear-wheel steer and active noise cancelling lifts this car out of the realm of others in the price class. This is a limo; others are executive saloons. Genesis is clearly pegging prices, for now, to get a decent market foothold. **SC**



Dashboard retains some physical controls. Driving position is improved too

It's hushed, composed and manoeuvrable, especially with four-wheel steering

an agreeable 25 minutes.

The all-wheel-drive powertrain is familiar: two compact electric motors (one at the front, one at the rear) that integrate their inverters and gearboxes into one assembly and deploy a total of 365bhp and 516lb ft. There is a choice of three drive modes – plus Snow – and more than enough performance: 0-62mph acceleration in 5.1sec and a 139mph top speed, all tamed by latest-level torque-vectoring and traction control systems.

Bristling with sophisticated noise-killing gadgetry, such as acoustic double glazing and an active noise cancelling system, the Electrified G80 is truly one of the quietest cars on the road, even if you throw Britain's ultimate limousines into the mix.

The chassis features Genesis's Electronic Control Suspension system's Road Preview, which employs a camera to look down the road and adjust the damping to suit. But the big news is optional rear-wheel steer, a very handy addition to a long-wheelbase car that both improves the low-speed turning circle by turning against the front wheels and improves high-speed stability by turning (ever so slightly) with them. Additionally, the front wheels disconnect from their motors when not needed, to cut mechanical drag.

Besides the extra length, which brings a small change to the rear pillar shape, the car gets modernised bumpers front and rear, a subtle grille update (it now features a power-assisted cover on the charge port), improvements to its already excellent headlights, some aero mods to improve brake cooling and a handsome new set of alloys, still 19-inchers as before.

Inside, most striking is the massive, highly customisable new fascia screen that combines the duties of the driver's instruments and those of a central screen with an associated bank of hard keys to control the ventilation.

The instrument array is cleverly repositioned, working with a new steering wheel, to largely correct the previous model's too-high driving position. It's still not perfect, but it's close. There's now just one trim level – called Dynamic – but you get a choice of smooth or nappa leather plus a selection of 14 exterior colours ranging from solid white to navy blue. There are the usual optional equipment packs that take an already well-equipped car costing £75,915 to about £80,000.

The full-house Electrified G80 we tried drives brilliantly. It's sensationally quiet. It rides very well on its extended wheelbase and is amazingly hushed especially on coarse surfaces, thanks to its (optional) noise cancelling system. It bounces a shade too much on long bumps, even in Sport, but always keeps its composure. The four-wheel steering (a must) greatly enhances the nicely weighted helm and makes low-speed manoeuvring simple.

Drive this car, with its obvious quality and (now) carefully developed controls and capabilities, and you'll soon find yourself viewing the Genesis Electrified G80 as a considerable bargain against rivals. The company says it has "high hopes" for this car in its current guise, and some time behind the wheel shows why.

STEVE CROPLEY

TECH SPEC

GENESIS ELECTRIFIED G80

Intelligent revisions to Genesis's EV flagship improve this spacious and luxurious saloon out of sight. Refinement a huge feature

★★★★☆

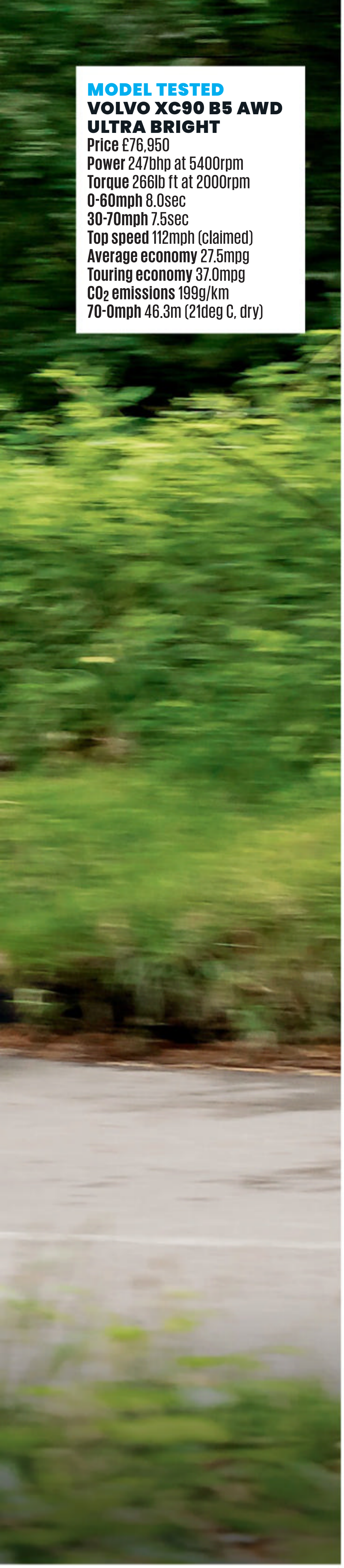
Price £75,915
Engine Two permanent magnet synchronous motors
Power 365bhp
Torque 516lb ft
Gearbox 1-spd reduction gear, 4WD
Kerb weight 2349kg
0-62mph 5.1sec
Top speed 139mph
Battery 94.5kWh (total)
Range, economy 354 miles, 3.4mpkWh
CO_2, tax band 0g/km, 3%
Rivals Mercedes EQE, BMW i5, Audi E-tron GT

ROAD TESTS

AUTOCAR ROAD TEST 5757

VOLVO XC90

Facelifted seven-seat old-stager gains an indefinite stay of execution



MODEL TESTED
VOLVO XC90 B5 AWD ULTRA BRIGHT
Price £76,950
Power 247bhp at 5400rpm
Torque 266lb ft at 2000rpm
0-60mph 8.0sec
30-70mph 7.5sec
Top speed 112mph (claimed)
Average economy 27.5mpg
Touring economy 37.0mpg
CO_2 emissions 199g/km
70-0mph 46.3m (21deg C, dry)

It was probably fate for the current version of the Volvo XC90, the vehicular embodiment of pragmatism and rationality, to steadfastly refuse to die. Why would it, after all, if it could still be useful?

The car originally planned as the XC90's all-electric successor, the EX90, is already in production yet this Swedish-made seven-seater – with us in its current generation since 2015 – has been given an indefinite stay of execution. It will provide mild-hybrid and plug-in hybrid alternatives to the electric-only EX90, says Volvo, "for as long as there is demand for them".

But what kind of alternatives might those be and can an ostensibly large premium-brand SUV 10 years old and counting really compete with so many much younger rivals? That's what we're about to find out here.

Volvo has given the XC90 what amounts to a facelift of medium scope and has reappraised its prices and equipment levels. There are fewer engine choices now, but there's also a more generous roster of kit and prices start from less than £65,000 – for a car with seven seats, and a whole lot else, as standard.

So does this perennially popular big family car – a dependable 100,000-unit-a-year seller for Volvo every year since its production hit full swing in 2016 – still have tangible selling points in 2025?

DESIGN & ENGINEERING

★★★⯪☆

PROS Plenty of space and versatility without being the biggest SUV of its kind
CONS Clearly not the third-gen model it arguably should be; limited range of engines

There is at least one exterior design change to this updated XC90 beyond the usual headlight and bumper tweaks wrought so easily on cars in mid-life without costly changes to production tooling. The 2025-model-year car has a new bonnet, which is subtly reprofiled and has a revised shutline at its foremost edge. It closes adjacent to new, slimmer headlights and above new radiator grille and front bumper designs.

Its front end provides the best chance of identifying this updated XC90 from the previous version. But a new rear bumper and revised lower door trims can be spotted elsewhere, and likewise new alloy wheel designs. Otherwise, it may be the new XC90's paintwork that best distinguishes it: our test car had the Mulberry Red signature colour first shown on its electric sibling model, the EX90.

Current car has been around since 2015

The XC90 continues on Volvo's SPA platform, then, and has a monocoque chassis made mostly of high-strength steel, augmented with aluminium in places. Its dimensions are unchanged so it's just under five metres long and 1.8 metres tall, which makes it a little less bulky at the kerb than some seven-seat rivals, such as the Audi Q7 and Land Rover's Defender 110.

Buyers are now offered mild-hybrid B5 and plug-in hybrid T8 powertrains, both with four-wheel drive. The B5 employs a Haldex-style electronically controlled all-wheel drive system and the T8's is delivered via electric rear-axle drive. The B6 petrol and B5D diesel options of the pre-facelifted car have been discontinued.

Our test car was a B5 AWD with a 2.0-litre turbocharged four-cylinder petrol engine and a 48V mild-hybrid system, rated for 247bhp of peak power and 266lb ft of torque. And if those sound like modest outputs for a full-sized premium SUV in 2025, that's because they are.

The T8 PHEV offers a peak system output of 450bhp (Volvo doesn't supply 'combined' torque figures for its PHEVs). It continues with the same drive battery as the pre-facelift T8, however, offering just under 15kWh of usable capacity. In a class where between 25kWh and 38kWh is now on offer, that looks a little mean and makes for a claimed EV range of only just over 40 miles.

For suspension, the XC90 retains the axles it has used all along – double wishbones up front and multi-link at the rear – with base models resting on coil springs at the front and Volvo's transverse composite leaf spring at the rear.

Those springs have been retuned, however, and new frequency-selective passive dampers added for a gentler but better-controlled ride. Mid- and upper-tier models such as our test car use adaptive dampers and air springs instead, which add 40mm of extra ground clearance in an off-road driving mode.

INTERIOR

★★★★☆

PROS Still sets a great standard for packaging and versatility; plenty of solid, classy material appeal
CONS Second- and third-row seats don't exactly feel luxurious

The XC90's seven-seats-as-standard approach to life in the large SUV niche is likely to go down well with its core clientele. There are two key points to note about its passenger versatility. One, you get those seven seats irrespective of powertrain choice. (In an equivalent Defender 110, Q7, BMW X5 or Mercedes GLE PHEV, the hybrid system packaging rules out a third row of seats.) Two, in the B5 AWD model, you get seven seats and a spacesaver spare wheel.

■ You can have either dark or, as here, traditional 'chrome' brightwork on a range-topping Ultra model, as you prefer. Lower in the range, Core models get bright chrome, Plus models dark.

■ Wheel rim sizes range from 20in (Core models) up through 21s and 22s. These 21s come as standard on range-topping Ultra-grade cars. The 22s (£795) have a more traditional straight-spoked look.

The XC90's second-row seats are three individual chairs rather than being split 60/40 and each reclines and slides fore and aft by 120mm to 'pass' available leg room to those in row three or to make extra boot space. The way the second-row chairs tilt and slide forwards makes accessing the third row reasonably easy for passengers, but some remote release buttons would certainly make putting those extra seats up easier when you're standing at the car's boot opening.

As for passenger space and comfort, the XC90's third row remains suitable very much for smaller adults and kids only. Its second-row seats are roomier, if a little meanly padded by the standards of luxury cars. Volvo's option to convert the middle second-row seat, with its built-in booster cushion, for younger children, and then to slide it forwards so that it can be accessed more easily from the front row, is likely to remain a popular feature.

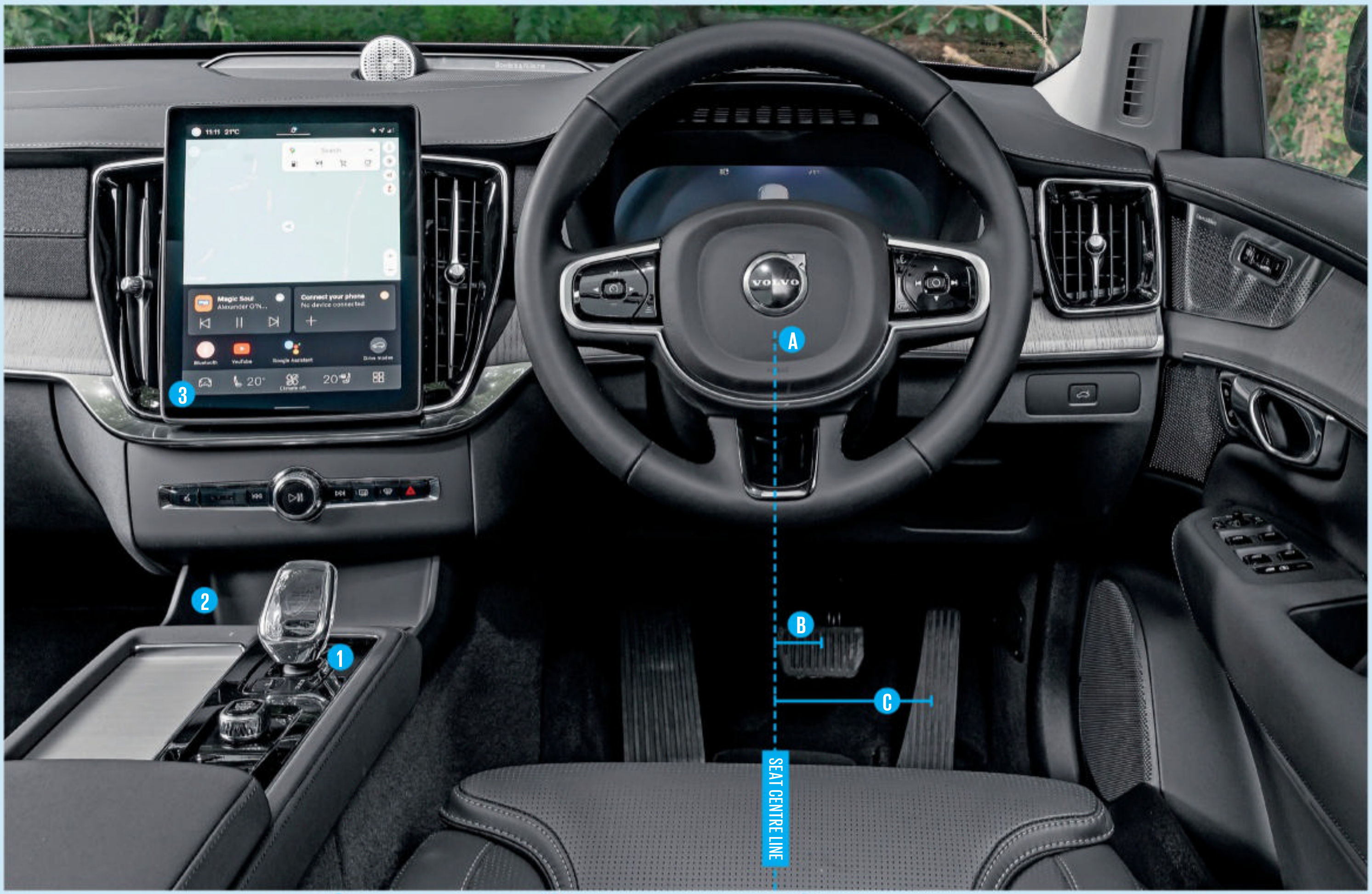
In the front, there's plenty of refreshed digital technology – a new 11.2in portrait-oriented touchscreen console, for one (see Multimedia, overleaf) – and some crisper-looking digital instruments. But, barring some redesigned air vents, most of the fascia and secondary controls are familiar and unchanged – oversized audio ▸

PHOTOGRAPHY MAX EDLESTON

① Cut-glass gear selector, from Swedish glassware maker Orrefors, is a feature of mid- and upper-grade cars. That it's a good size and sited in an intuitive place pleases us most.

② Wireless charging pad is at the base of the centre stack and should work well for Android smartphones. Apple users are relying on wired mirroring for now, which is disappointing.

③ Car icon, fixed on the touchscreen, takes you directly to a menu where lane keeping can be disabled. For the speed limit reminder, press the left arrow on the left-hand steering spoke.



WHEEL AND PEDAL ALIGNMENT Ⓐ Steering offset 0mm Ⓑ Brake offset 50mm right Ⓒ Accelerator offset 190mm right. Pedal offset is a little pronounced but it didn't bother our testers. The steering column offers a wide range of adjustment.

◂ volume button and twist-to-start engine start/stop knob included.

The front seats, like those in the rear, are a little thinly padded in places but offer lots of adjustment potential and commendable comfort in broad terms. Visibility is as good as you could want, with the potential to sit up high if you prefer. Perceived material quality and fit and finish are strong, with nothing looking cheap or antiquated.

MULTIMEDIA

★★★☆☆

PROS Usability is improved, particularly for ADAS features
CONS Wireless mirroring for Apple phones has yet to be added; there's no physical cursor controller and few physical buttons

The XC90's new 11.2in portrait touchscreen is of the generation first seen in the EX30 and is making its way into other Volvos this year. Powered by Qualcomm Snapdragon processors, it's claimed to deliver much better responsiveness than the old XC90's smaller screen, as well as crisper, clearer graphics.

There's still no physical cursor controller so usability is entirely via the screen or voice command. The heater controls permanently occupy a portion of the display, expanding when you open them, and on the home screen a quick reference 'widget' tries – but in our experience, doesn't typically succeed – to display your most frequently accessed functions.

Like other Android-based systems, this one works well if you use Google-based apps on an Android smartphone. If you don't, however, you'll find functionality limited. (Our test car would mirror an iPhone only via a wired connection – not a great look on a £75,000 luxury SUV in 2025.)

The general usability of the system has improved a little since our EX30 road test. Volvo's quick-access vehicle settings menu allows you to disable certain ADAS features, for instance, while a key on the left steering wheel spoke now permits one-touch deactivation of the speed limit governance buzzer.

We would still prefer some kind of physical cursor controller, either on the steering spokes or centre console, to allow scrolling around the system while only glancing down from the road. But Volvo's system does seem like it's slowly heading in the right direction.

PERFORMANCE

★★★☆☆

PROS Pleasant, refined and drivable at a suitably relaxed pace
CONS Noisier and more laboured when revving hard; gearbox can be bad-mannered when hurried

There's a certain simplicity and lack of frippery about the XC90's B5 mild-hybrid petrol engine that makes it quite likeable when it's working at its laid-back best – even if, compared with the sorts of combustion engines that typically power cars like this, it can feel short of refinement and torque at times.

It's a credit to the tuning of the car's 48V hybrid system that it doesn't tend to come up short routinely in typical day-to-day motoring. The XC90 has plenty of linear response under the first 50% of the accelerator pedal's travel. You don't need to dig much deeper into the pedal than that to move with the give-and-take of traffic flow, both in town and out of it. And it doesn't seem to need to kick down through the ratios very often, either, in order to ease into gaps, climb gradients and generally keep its two-tonne mass moving along agreeably, which accords with the car's wider relaxing character rather nicely.

It's what happens when you call for more that gives the game away about what this XC90 lacks: specifically, the 400lb ft or so of accessible torque that a multi-cylinder diesel might be able to summon when getting a hurry on.

The 8.0sec 0-60mph time we recorded for the car looks respectable enough in isolation (although it's still more than a second slower than an equivalent six-cylinder diesel might be). But subjectively, instead of holding a higher gear and simply grunting its way forwards, the B5 tends to rev a little harshly and fruitlessly beyond 4500rpm when you need speed. And the way the eight-speed automatic gearbox tends to delay and then grab at downshifts does little to add any sense of big-car assurance.

The car's mechanical refinement is quite good at a cruise, but less good when the engine has just started from cold or is laboured.

Measured braking performance, on the standard-fit Continental

PremiumContact 6 tyres, was also good, with no evidence of fade.

RIDE & HANDLING

★★★⯪☆

PROS Comfortable and quiet ride, for the most part; conventional big-car handling is ever-predictable
CONS Potholes and sharp edges cause a hollow clunk; not an enticing drive

On this evidence, the XC90 seems much the same softly sprung, comfort-focused big family car that it always was. We have yet to test one on standard suspension on UK roads, although that version did impress us for comfort and isolation on its European launch earlier this year. Our test car had Volvo's air suspension and Four-C adaptive dampers instead, as well as the 21in wheels that come with Ultra trim.

The car's operating regime is simplicity itself. Just as there are no paddles for gear selection, so there are no driving modes as such, apart from the Offroad mode, which we will cover shortly. However, you can independently select 'soft' and 'firm' modes for the suspension and steering through the touchscreen.

The ride is generally settled, quiet and absorbent with the suspension in 'soft', as you would want it to be. It soaks up longer-wave inputs well and without letting the body control loll or pitch, although short, sharp inputs do sometimes crash through the shock absorption in a way that would seem to make smaller, lighter rims a smarter option.

The car doesn't really seek to hide its size or mass, either on a flowing country road or when negotiating a tight car park. There's no four-wheel steering tech here or active anti-roll control, just a medium-paced steering rack and a chassis with respectable mechanical grip levels but little agenda to engage or entertain. Instead, it feels much more interested in being transparent, consistent and straightforward – and takes little effort in the understanding.

Some might call it a touch stolid and dull; others just pleasant, reassuring, easy company. Either way, it's classic Volvo dynamic playbook stuff.

OFF ROAD

★★★☆☆

PROS Offroad mode boosts ground clearance (on cars with optional air suspension)
CONS Road-biased standard-fit tyres aren't brilliant on mud and grass; Offroad mode automatically cancels at 25mph

The XC90 doesn't trade on a particularly rugged sort of off-road capability. It doesn't offer low-range gearing or locking differentials. Moreover, our test car came on road-biased Continental tyres that anyone who expected to do regular driving on wet grass or mud would be well advised to swap for something more dual-purpose.

Our B5 AWD generated a fair amount of traction on level gravel but struggled more on mud and through ruts, leaning a lot on its traction control. Even in Offroad mode, which hikes the XC90 on its air springs to exceed 250mm of ground clearance and recalibrates its powertrain and ESC, the car felt a little short of wheel articulation when dealing with mogul-style asymmetrical bumps, although it completed Horiba MIRA's 'nursery slopes' off-road course without grounding out or grinding to a halt.

One slight annoyance is that the car automatically deselects its Offroad mode when your speed exceeds 25mph, returning to its standard ride height without warning. So once you've selected it, you need to be vigilant to check that it's still engaged.

BUYING & OWNING

★★★★☆

PROS Entry prices beat those of German premium opponents; lots of equipment for the money
CONS PHEV is pricier and lacks tax-busting electric range; low-30s to the gallon is the best a B5 gives

Volvo's sub-£65k entry price for Core-grade XC90 B5s may help to keep buyers interested, once they discover that a rival Audi, BMW, Land Rover or Mercedes is likely to cost them around £10k more – and more still in like-for-like form.

Volvo includes the aforementioned seven seats as standard – heated in the front and for the outer middle-row ones – as well as four-zone air conditioning and matrix LED headlights. Air suspension and premium audio start to be introduced on mid-grade Plus models, although they can still be had for less than £70k.

T8 PHEV models don't enjoy quite the same rational pecuniary appeal but, even here, they can be had from £73k compared with £80k and upwards for rivals. None of them will get a company car driver near a 6% benefit-in-kind classification for 2025-26, however – and more expensive configurations could actually loom quite close to a 13% rating.

Our test car was about as economical as you could expect a two-tonne, 2.0-litre turbo petrol family SUV to be, which is to say not very. That it recorded a marginally better 'everyday' efficiency loop test result than its 'touring' one (average test speeds of 35mph versus 65mph) suggests that Volvo's 48V hybrid system is indeed worth its place in urban motoring. In mixed daily use, we'd expect to see low-30s to the gallon, so you'd get better from a full hybrid and also marginally so from an equivalent diesel, although possibly not by enough in the latter case to make it worth paying 10p a litre more for the fuel itself. ▸

FRONT Leg room 1100mm, head room 1000mm. Front seats have plenty of adjustment range, are fairly easy to board and offer good visibility.

REAR Leg room 630-750mm, head room 930mm. Backrests of the second row recline, which can extend head room. Seats are comfy if a little narrow.

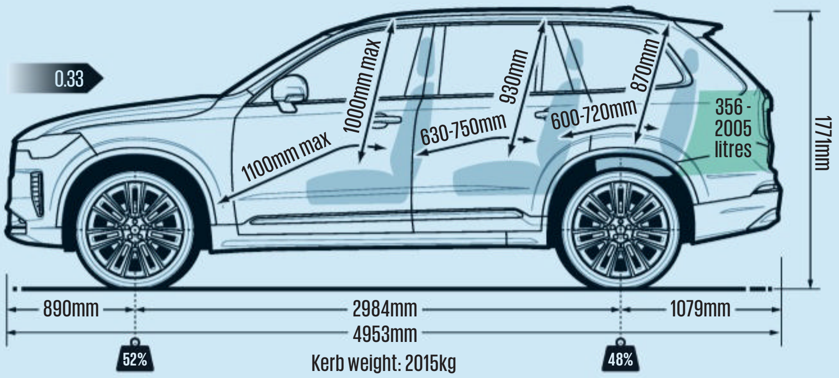
BOOT Length 400-1250-2120mm, width 1180-1380mm, height 370-800mm. Third row makes the boot slightly shallow, if only under the load bay cover.

"It's pleasant, refined and drivable at a relaxed pace"

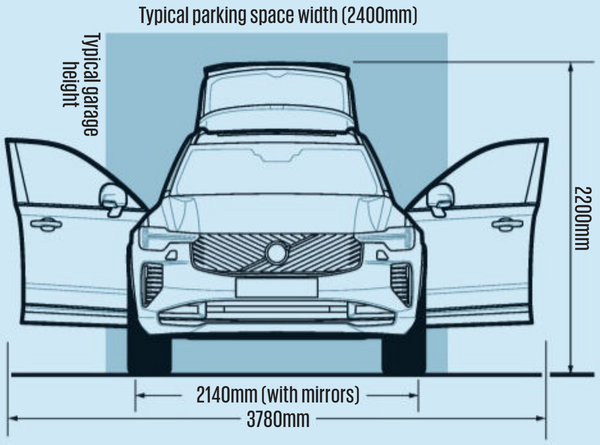
TEST RESULTS

DIMENSIONS

Length 4953mm **Width** 2140mm/1958mm (with/without mirrors) **Height** 1771mm
Door span 3780mm **Max height to open bootlid** 2200mm

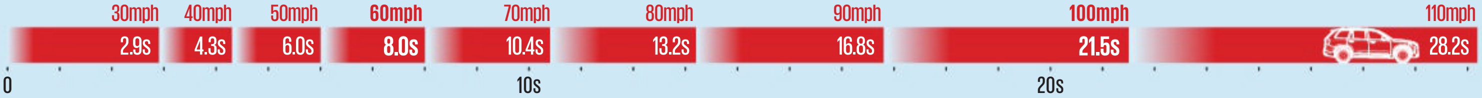

0.33
1100mm max
1000mm max
630-750mm
930mm
600-720mm
870mm
356 - 2005 litres
1771mm
890mm
2984mm
1079mm
4953mm
52%
48%
Kerb weight: 2015kg

PARKING

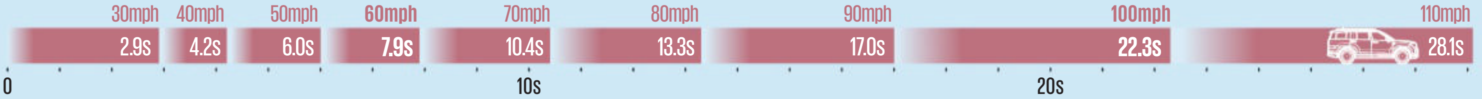

Typical parking space width (2400mm)
Typical garage height
2200mm
2140mm (with mirrors)
3780mm

ACCELERATION

Test conditions 21deg C, dry
Standing quarter mile 16.2sec at 88.5mph **Standing km** 29.4sec at 111.5mph **30-70mph** 7.5sec **30-70mph in fourth** 11.4sec **0-62mph** 8.4sec

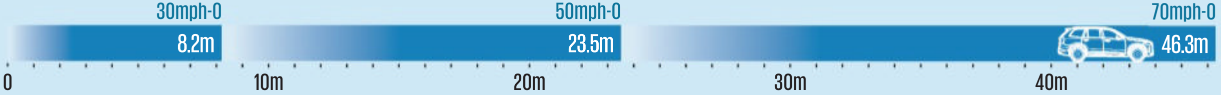


Hyundai Santa Fe 1.6T HEV Premium (2024, 17deg C, dry)
Standing quarter mile 16.2sec at 88.1mph **Standing km** 29.5sec at 110.2mph **30-70mph** 7.5sec **30-70mph in fourth** 11.2sec

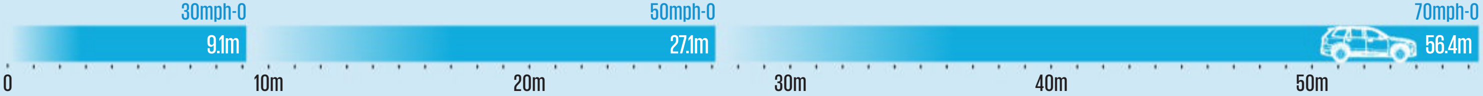


BRAKING

Dry 60-0mph 2.40sec



Wet 60-0mph 2.95sec

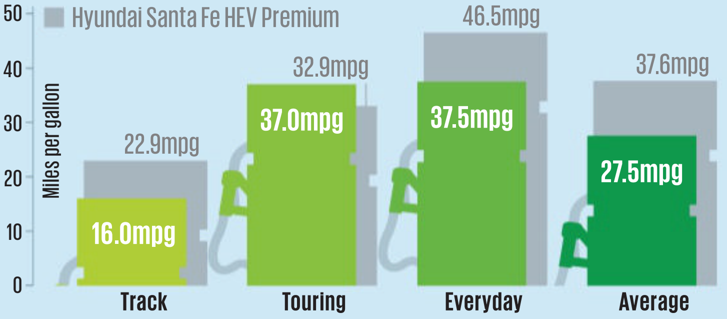


ACCELERATION IN GEAR

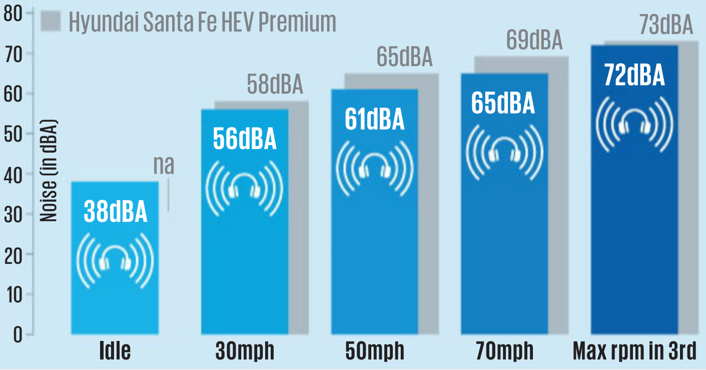
mph	Time (sec) 2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th
20-40	2.9	3.9					
30-50	3.2	3.9	5.6	7.9			
40-60		4.2	5.5	6.6	9.8		
50-70		4.5	5.8	6.9	9.1	15.0	24.0
60-80			6.1	7.6	10.0	14.6	22.9
70-90			6.7	8.1	11.3	16.9	24.1
80-100			8.2	9.0	12.6		
90-110				11.1			
100-120							
110-130							

RUNNING EFFICIENCY

WLTP 30.7-32.8mpg (combined) **Test range** 429/578/586 miles (average/touring/everyday)

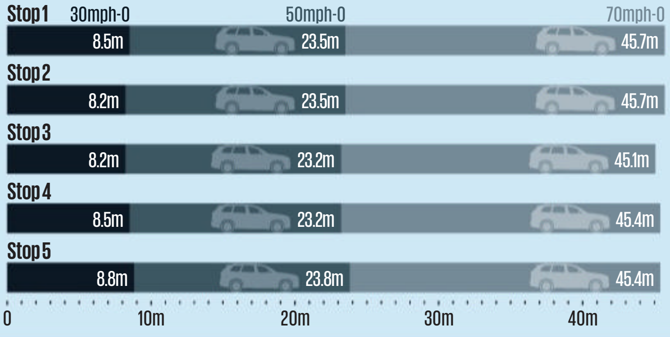


CABIN NOISE



BRAKING ENDURANCE

Fade variance 70-0m – stop 1 vs stop 5: -0.3m



PETER LIDDIARD

THE SMALL PRINT Power-to-weight and torque-to-weight figures are calculated using manufacturer's claimed kerb weight. Running efficiency is tested on a closed test track; 'touring' is representative of UK motorway driving, 'everyday' of intra-urban driving. Acceleration, braking and cabin noise are measured on reference surfaces, for cabin noise using a handheld decibel meter. Charging equipment may vary, but charger power always exceeds the advertised peak draw of the test car, unless stated. Second-row leg room is typical, measured behind a driver's seat set for 1000mm of leg room. © 2025, Haymarket Media Group Ltd. Test results may not be reproduced without editor's written permission.

MANUFACTURER'S SPECIFICATION

VOLVO XC90 B5 AWD ULTRA BRIGHT

On-the-road price £76,950
Price as tested £77,745
Value after 3yrs/36k miles £33,150
Contract hire £915 pcm (£5490 deposit + 36 months/30,000 miles)
Typical PCP £997 pcm (£9970 deposit + 36 months/30,000 miles)
Insurance group 39

FITTED EQUIPMENT

Standard 21in alloy wheels, four-zone climate control, head-up display, matrix LED headlights, crystal gear selector, massage front seats, Bowers & Wilkins audio
Optional Mulberry Red paint £795

ENGINE

Installation Front, transverse, 4WD
Type 4 cyls in line, 1969cc, turbocharged, petrol, plus 48V ISG
Power 247bhp at 5400rpm
Torque 266lb ft at 2000rpm
Redline 6100rpm
Specific output 125bhp per litre
Power to weight 123bhp per tonne
Torque to weight 132lb ft per tonne

GEARBOX

Type 8-spd automatic
Ratios/mph per 1000rpm
1st 5.06/5.2 **2nd** 3.07/8.6 **3rd** 2.05/12.9 **4th** 1.52/17.4 **5th** 1.26/21.0 **6th** 1.00/26.5 **7th** 0.79/33.5 **8th** 0.66/40.1
Final drive ratio 3.33:1
rpm in top gear at 70/80mph 1744/1993

CHASSIS & BODY

Construction Steel and aluminium monocoque
Weight/as tested 2015kg/2117kg
Weight distribution (f/r) 52%/48%
Drag coefficient 0.33
Wheels 10.0Jx21in
Tyres 275/40 R21 VXL 107V, Continental PremiumContact 6
Spare Spacesaver
Fuel tank 71 litres (under rear seats, filler on offside rear wing)

SUSPENSION & STEERING

Front Double wishbones, air springs, anti-roll bar **Rear** Multi-link, air springs, anti-roll bar **Steering** EPAS, rack and pinion; 2.9 turns lock to lock; 12.5m turning circle

BRAKES

Front 345mm ventilated discs, two-piston calipers
Rear 320mm ventilated discs, single-piston calipers
Handbrake type Electronic, switch

SAFETY

Euro NCAP rating 5 stars (2015)
Adult occupant 97%, child occupant 87%, vulnerable road users 72%, safety assist 94%

EMISSIONS & TAX

CO₂ 199g/km
BIK at 20/40% pcm £462/£924

VERDICT

Still a mature, versatile, wilfully unspectacular choice

★★★⯪☆

The market for big family cars in 2025 is very different from the one that the second-generation XC90 emerged into in 2015 – and yet this car still deserves a place in it today.

The XC90 is more hemmed in by rivals than it used to be and it has more of a bit part to play, granted. If global car buyers had, over the past five years, adopted EVs with more unbridled enthusiasm, Volvo probably wouldn't be where it is now: with two seven-seat, full-sized SUVs on sale.

And yet, for people hesitant that an EV can meet the transportation needs of their family with the same nonchalance as a fossil-fuelled XC90 can, the old-stager's reprieve is well earned. It isn't especially desirable, capable or tough, and it won't entice or excite. It's simply a big, functional, usable car for a reasonable price.

TESTERS' NOTES

ILLYA VERPRAET
The PHEV loses the underfloor boot space that the B5 has, so while mulling powertrains, consider if you want room for a spacesaver spare wheel or not.

MATT SAUNDERS
There aren't Isofix points on all three second-row seats but Volvo's built-in middle-seat booster makes up for that. You could put winged child seats in the outer seats, stagger their positions relative to the middle one, and make three toddlers very comfortable.

FACELIFT FIXES

- Consider launching a cheaper, lower-powered T6 PHEV or even a full hybrid.
- Keep going with the suspension tuning until ride comfort is a defining strength.
- Offer all-season tyres as part of a towing pack option.

RANKING RIVALS

	1	2	3	4	5	6
					VOLVO XC90 B5 AWD ULTRA BRIGHT	
	LAND ROVER DEFENDER 110 D350 Right-sized Defender with its best engine is unbeatable. Capable, comfortable, versatile and desirable with it.	**BMW X5 XDRIVE30D XLINE (SEVEN-SEAT)** One of few refuges of the BMW diesel six. Pricier than the Volvo in like-for-like trim and better to drive.	**AUDI Q7 3.0 TDI 286 S LINE** Ageing Q7 is keener value than it used to be. Excellent interior quality, versatility and refinement.	**MERCEDES GLE 300D AMG LINE PREMIUM** Recently facelifted. Pricey if you want the six-pot diesel, which this isn't. Lots of tech and luxury appeal.		**GENESIS GV80 2.5T AWD LUXURY PLUS** An alternative pick, if you can find a nearly new one. Six-seat cabin with captain's chairs is different.
	★★★★⯪	★★★★☆	★★★⯪☆	★★★⯪☆		★★★☆☆
Price	£74,130	£75,980	£74,565	£79,305		£73,550
Power, torque	345bhp, 516lb ft	282bhp, 479lb ft	282bhp, 443lb ft	266bhp, 406lb ft		301bhp, 311lb ft
0-62mph, top speed	6.4sec, 119mph	6.3sec, 145mph	6.1sec, 150mph	6.9sec, 143mph		6.9sec, 147mph
CO₂, economy	226g/km, 32.7mpg	193g/km, 38.2mpg	209g/km, 35.3mpg	186g/km, 39.8mpg		248g/km, 25.3mpg

AUTOCAR **ROAD TEST 5758**

FORD TOURNEO CONNECT

Ford turns to PHEV power for its mid-sized, VW-built monocab MPV

As the fortunes of their opposite numbers from the Fast East have risen, European volume car makers have had it tough. While consolidation of ownership has given some a lifeline, others have simply found new ways to work together to adapt and survive.

The joint venture on commercial vehicles between Ford and Volkswagen, announced in 2019, is an example. Ford engineered the current VW Amarok and manufactures it alongside its own Ranger pick-up in South Africa. In return (as well as giving Ford access to its MEB electric car platform for the Explorer and Capri), VW engineered and produces Ford's mid-sized 'multi-activity vehicle', the Tourneo Connect, alongside its own Caddy in Poznan, Poland.

But does the customer end up with the car they expect? That's a question this road test will address, as the latest Tourneo Connect – complete with a Volkswagen PHEV powertrain – arrives in the UK.

DESIGN & ENGINEERING

★★★☆☆

PROS Just enough electrification for the class; PHEV option doesn't sacrifice versatility

CONS Doesn't look much like a Ford at all from some angles

Ford's range of boxy MPV models now has three tiers. It opens with the Puma-based Tourneo Courier. The C-segment-sized Tourneo Connect is next and, unlike the Courier, comes in both regular- and long-wheelbase forms, with up to seven seats. The Tourneo Custom is the biggest of the trio, ostensibly a nine-seat Transit minibus.

The Courier and Custom can be had as EVs but the Connect has been ICE-only since its 2022 introduction. Until now, that is, thanks to this new plug-in hybrid model, which uses a less powerful version of the 1.5-litre PHEV system also seen in the Golf, Passat, Tiguan and elsewhere.

A key bit of niche information here concerns the taxi market and specifically wheelchair taxi conversion. By going electric, many of the Connect's rivals have neglected the wheelchair-accessible vehicle (WAV) market, as the underfloor packaging of an EV rules out adaptation for wheelchairs. Ford claims the Connect PHEV can be adapted as a WAV in long-wheelbase form, although the market's WAV specialists have yet to finalise their particular conversions for it.

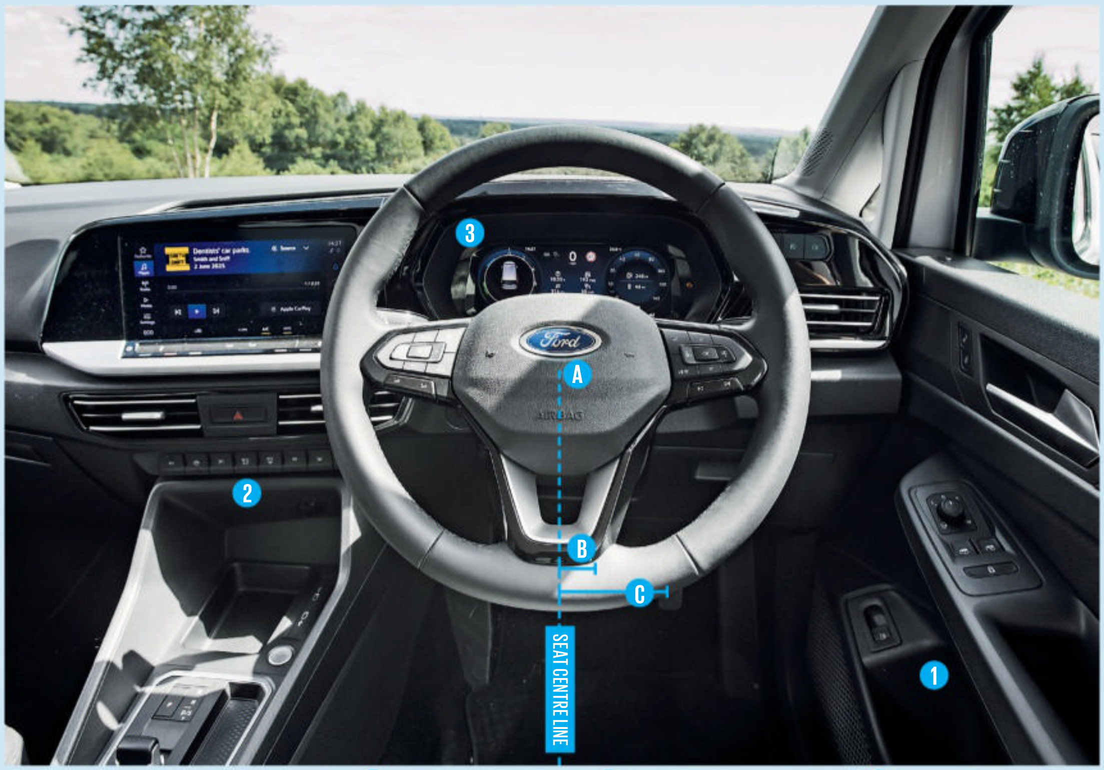
The Connect's 114bhp 1.5-litre turbo petrol and 120bhp 2.0-litre turbo diesel engines, both VW-sourced options, continue alongside the new PHEV, which itself combines a 114bhp electric motor with a detuned 1.5-litre turbo petrol engine from VW's latest-generation four-cylinder eHybrid set-up for total outputs of 148bhp and 258lb ft.

MODEL TESTED
FORD TOURNEO CONNECT 1.5 ECOBOOST PHEV TITANIUM
Price £37,270
Power 148bhp
Torque 258lb ft
0-60mph 9.7sec
30-70mph 9.5sec
Top speed 112mph (claimed)
Average economy 115.0mpg
Electric range 64 miles
CO_2 emissions 11g/km
70-0mph 49.1m (15deg C, dry)

① Dash-top cubby extends available storage beyond that afforded by the roomy door bins and smallish armrest cubby. There's also a useful roof console.

② Row of physical menu buttons and HVAC controls under the air vents make a big contribution to ease of use. VW itself could do a lot worse than appropriating it.

③ Digital instruments are standard on all UK model grades and allow great configurability of navigation mapping, trip data and more.



WHEEL AND PEDAL ALIGNMENT Ⓐ Steering offset 0mm Ⓑ Brake offset 30mm right Ⓒ Accelerator offset 160mm right. Regular seats are okay, with lots of vertical adjustment. 'Comfort' seats (not fitted) are optional.

There are no longer any four-wheel-drive models. All use six- or seven-speed dual-clutch front-drive transmissions. Suspension is via independent struts at the front and a torsion beam at the rear.

INTERIOR

★★★★☆

PROS Even the smallest version has huge load capacity; zero-emissions running as a WAV taxi

CONS It could put some of its space to cleverer use; no separately opening tailgate glass

Of all the Ford cars made in partnership with VW (the Ranger pick-up, Explorer, Capri and this), the Tourneo Connect looks the least like a Ford – both inside and out.

But for the badge on the steering wheel, this might as well be a VW interior, from door handles to electric window switches to column stalks. There is plenty of substantial feel about the fixtures and fittings, however. It has a few too many shiny mouldings around the dashboard perhaps for any materially plush cabin appeal, although everything looks hardy and feels solid and well secured.

VW's 10in multimedia touchscreen runs Ford's own infotainment software, which is easy enough to use. A row of permanent physical shortcut buttons below the screen is a great help in navigating it, making ADAS control toggles quickly accessible and doing the same for powertrain mode selection. Wireless smartphone mirroring is standard, with a device charging pad included on higher-grade Active models.

The car's boxy profile and high roofline provide an abundance of front head room, even for taller drivers who prefer a higher-set seat, and it's the same in the rear.

Our test car was a short-wheelbase five-seater. (Seven seats are standard on all long-wheelbase models and an option on all short-wheelbase cars except for SWB PHEVs.) Its second-row chairs can be tumbled forwards and flipped up against the front seatbacks to extend cargo capacity or removed.

Being fairly heavy, they're too awkward to take out on a whim. But for those occasions when you do want maximum carrying space, their removal opens up more than 2500 litres of capacity even in the SWB car, up to a roofline that grants almost 1.2m of peak loading height. A standard folding front passenger seatback also gives you the option of carrying extra-long loads.

Sliding back seats and some cleverer expandable oddment storage features in the roof and boot sides wouldn't have gone amiss here. But even without them, the Connect's huge, tall, straight-sided cargo bay could make what is still a fairly small car remarkably useful.

PERFORMANCE

★★★★☆

PROS Plenty of go, in electric and hybrid modes; refined and quiet

CONS Automatic regen setting spoils brake pedal feel

It takes only a few yards in the Connect PHEV to appreciate what relevant qualities it will bring to the line-up. The car moves off under electric power almost all of the time and there's a more than adequate sufficiency of it for part-throttle town motoring.

We tested the car against the clock running as a regular hybrid and in EV mode, and while it narrowly squeezed under the 10sec-to-60mph yardstick with ▶

■ From the rear, it's very hard to tell this car from a Caddy once you cover the badge. The long vertical tail-lights of both don't help. A Ford-esque grille gives some differentiation up front.

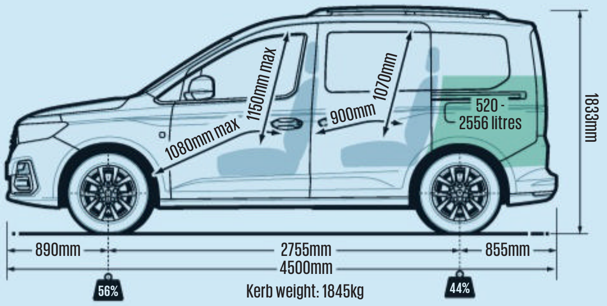
■ Sliding rear passenger doors are handy in tight car parks but don't come with proper, fully opening rear windows, which will make people in the second row feel a little overlooked.

PHOTOGRAPHY JACK HARRISON

TEST RESULTS

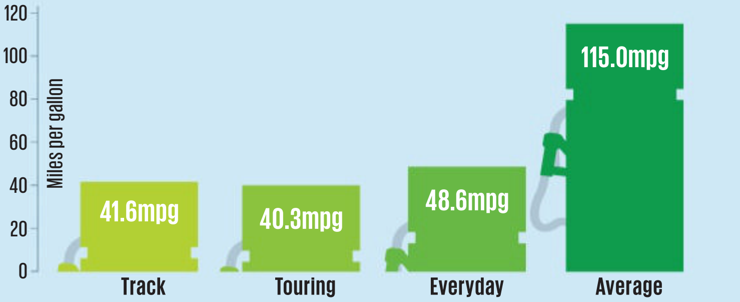
DIMENSIONS

Length 4500mm **Width** 2100mm/1931mm (with/without mirrors) **Height** 1833mm **Door span** 3720mm **Max height to open bootlid** 2200mm



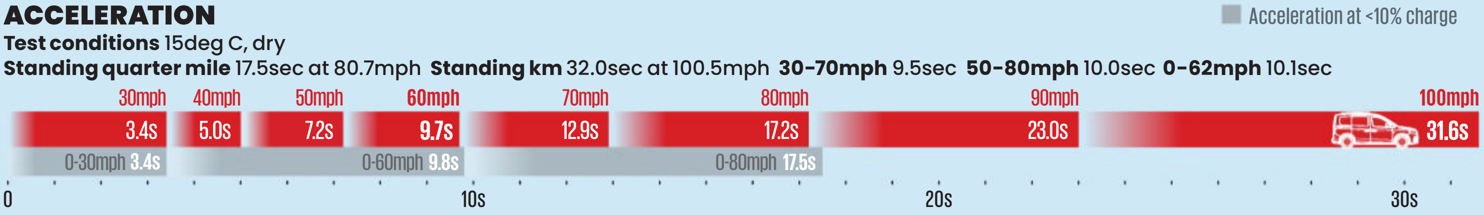
RUNNING EFFICIENCY

WLTP 553mpg (combined) **Test range** 1329/507/599 miles (average/touring/everyday) **Electric test range** 64 miles



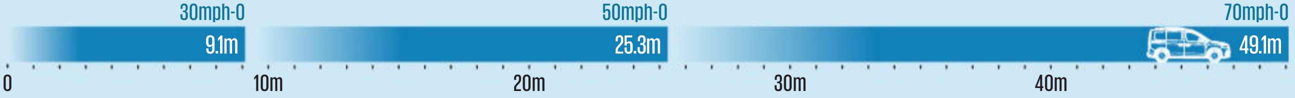
ACCELERATION

Test conditions 15deg C, dry
Standing quarter mile 17.5sec at 80.7mph **Standing km** 32.0sec at 100.5mph **30-70mph** 9.5sec **50-80mph** 10.0sec **0-62mph** 10.1sec

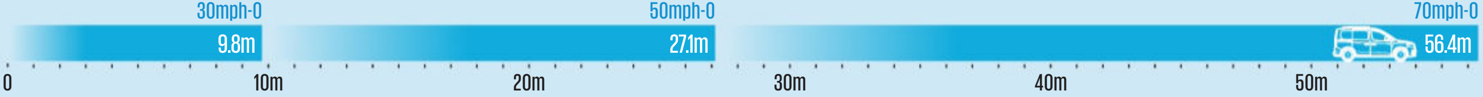


BRAKING

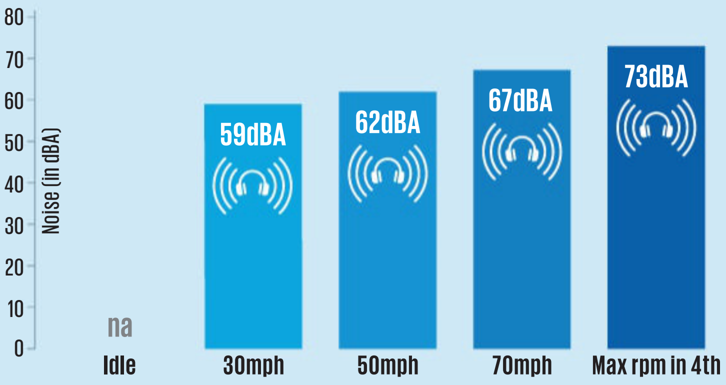
Dry 60-0mph 2.69sec



Wet 60-0mph 3.18sec



CABIN NOISE



MANUFACTURER'S SPECIFICATION

FORD TOURNEO CONNECT 1.5 ECOBOOST PHEV TITANIUM

On-the-road price £37,270
Price as tested £37,990
Value after 3yrs/36k miles £17,100
Insurance group 15E

HYBRID POWERTRAIN

Engine Front, transverse, FWD
Type 4 cyls in line, 1498cc, turbo, petrol **Motor** Permanent magnet synchronous motor, gearbox-mounted; 114bhp, 243lb ft **Battery** 25.7/19.7kWh (total/usable)
Total power 148bhp
Total torque 258lb ft
Power to weight 80bhp per tonne
Torque to weight 140lb ft per tonne

GEARBOX

Type 6-spd dual-clutch automatic

CHASSIS & BODY

Construction Steel monocoque
Weight/as tested 1845kg/1876kg
Wheels 6.5Jx17in
Tyres 215/55 R17 98H, Giti GitiSynergy H2
Fuel tank 50 litres (under rear seats, filler on nearside rear wing)

SUSPENSION & STEERING

Front MacPherson struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar
Rear Torsion beam, coil springs
Steering EPAS, rack and pinion; 2.6 turns lock to lock; 11.4m turning circle

> "It feels responsive, and nippy without being over-sensitive"

EF74 MWG
TOURNEO

PETER LIDDIARD

THE SMALL PRINT Power-to-weight and torque-to-weight figures are calculated using manufacturer's claimed kerb weight. Running efficiency is tested on a closed test track; 'touring' is representative of UK motorway driving, 'everyday' of intra-urban driving. Acceleration, braking and cabin noise are measured on reference surfaces, for cabin noise using a handheld decibel meter. Charging equipment may vary, but charger power always exceeds the advertised peak draw of the test car, unless stated. Second-row leg room is typical, measured behind a driver's seat set for 1000mm of leg room. © 2025, Haymarket Media Group Ltd. Test results may not be reproduced without editor's written permission.

◂ both piston and electric motors working in tandem, it was barely two seconds slower without the help of the petrol element.

It isn't the job of a vehicle like this to be fast, of course, but instead to hit an assured standard on outright performance with easy control and good drivability, so as to keep passengers and load alike well located and secure, and to have a little potency in reserve when heavy hauling is needed.

The VW-sourced petrol-electric powertrain manages all that. It feels fairly responsive, and nippy without being over-sensitive, at town speeds; has enough urge to cope with flowing country roads and not get overworked when climbing; and only begins to feel slightly outmatched during the kind of fast motorway driving that most smaller utility vehicles would be likely to struggle with.

Unlike with some hybrid systems, you can select gears yourself using the shift paddles, so you can usefully prep it for overtaking or climbing, but it could sometimes be quicker with downshifts.

The car's default energy regeneration mode, meanwhile, is an 'automatic' one that ramps up regen on a trailing throttle in heavy traffic, for example, but it also changes the progression of the brake pedal having done so, which most testers disliked.

Turn the regen mode to 'low' and the car coasts more freely. The brake pedal travel becomes longer and feels quite soft initially, but you learn to modulate it and keep the car smooth in traffic well enough.

RIDE & HANDLING

★★★⯪☆

PROS Feels stable and secure enough to handle a heavy load
CONS Doesn't distinguish itself on the road or live long in the memory

There isn't much Ford-typical dynamic flavour about the Connect's day-to-day driving – and, frankly, nor should there be.

Boxy utility cars given to carrying heavy loads piled high need handling security and directional stability much more than they do cornering agility and driver involvement. So while greater directness and pace to the car's on-centre steering response might have felt 'more Ford', it would also have been misplaced if it made this car fussier to steer. Firmer suspension rates might have fostered better back-road body control but wouldn't have been worth their place either if they'd have made what is a broadly comfortable and settled ride needlessly reactive.

This car gets away with its steady, conservative dynamic character, in short, because of what it is. It will tolerate being driven fairly quickly by rolling a fair bit but has moderate yet fairly well-balanced grip levels that survive into high speeds and isn't so softly sprung that you would expect a full cargo load to set it swaying and heaving down the road.

ASSISTED DRIVING

★★★⯪☆

PROS Accessible touchscreen controls; mostly unintrusive systems
CONS Adaptive cruise control is a bit risk-averse

A full array of ADAS features was one of VW's big reasons for moving the Caddy – and, by association, the Ford Tourneo Connect – onto its passenger car MQB platform. So the Tourneo gets everything mandated by the latest EU legislation (driver monitoring, lane keeping assist, autonomous emergency braking and speeding reminder buzzer systems) as well as adaptive cruise control, blindspot monitoring, hill start assist and a reversing camera.

The systems are easy to toggle on and off, and if you deactivate the speeding reminder and lane keeping, you'll find the others don't intrude on the driving experience. Adaptive cruise tends to overreact for cars in adjacent motorway lanes but otherwise works well.

BUYING & OWNING

★★★⯪☆

PROS Usefully long electric range; DC rapid-charging compatibility; good urban efficiency
CONS PHEV could easily be a £40k car in the guise you would want

Being a size bigger than many of its supermini-based rivals (Citroën Berlingo, Vauxhall Combo Life, Peugeot Rifter), the Tourneo Connect was already saddled with a relatively high list price before the arrival of the PHEV version, which hikes matters further.

The car is better equipped than most of its ilk, being offered in only Titanium and Active grades, but the PHEV powertrain kicks off just above £37k for a short-wheelbase model and rises to the far side of £40k. For a car this utilitarian, it's a lot of money and plenty of all-electric options cost less.

Still, the WAV taxi factor could rescue the situation for some and its electric-only usability is impressive. Thanks to its 19.7kWh battery, we recorded a real-world, mixed-use average electric range of 64 miles, which is close to as good as any sub-£40k PHEV. Also, 50kW DC rapid charging is supported, returning the drive battery from empty to full in less than 45 minutes. **A**

VERDICT

PHEV power is a smart choice in this versatile, though expensive, utility MPV

★★★⯪☆

It may not be the most authentic Ford ever but the Tourneo Connect PHEV nonetheless feels like the right car, with a suitable powertrain, for its very particular corner of the market.

However, with so many new brands redefining what value for money looks like in 2025, a mid-sized utility car with commercial roots that costs £37k seems expensive.

The Tourneo Connect has versatility, drivability, comfort, refinement, huge outright space and surprising electric usability. But it will need every trump card and more to justify its price.

RIVALS

CITROEN BERLINGO
From £23,355
★★★★☆

DACIA JOGGER HYBRID
From £22,860
★★★★☆

PEUGEOT RIFTER
From £26,515
★★★⯪☆

4 **FORD TOURNEO CONNECT**

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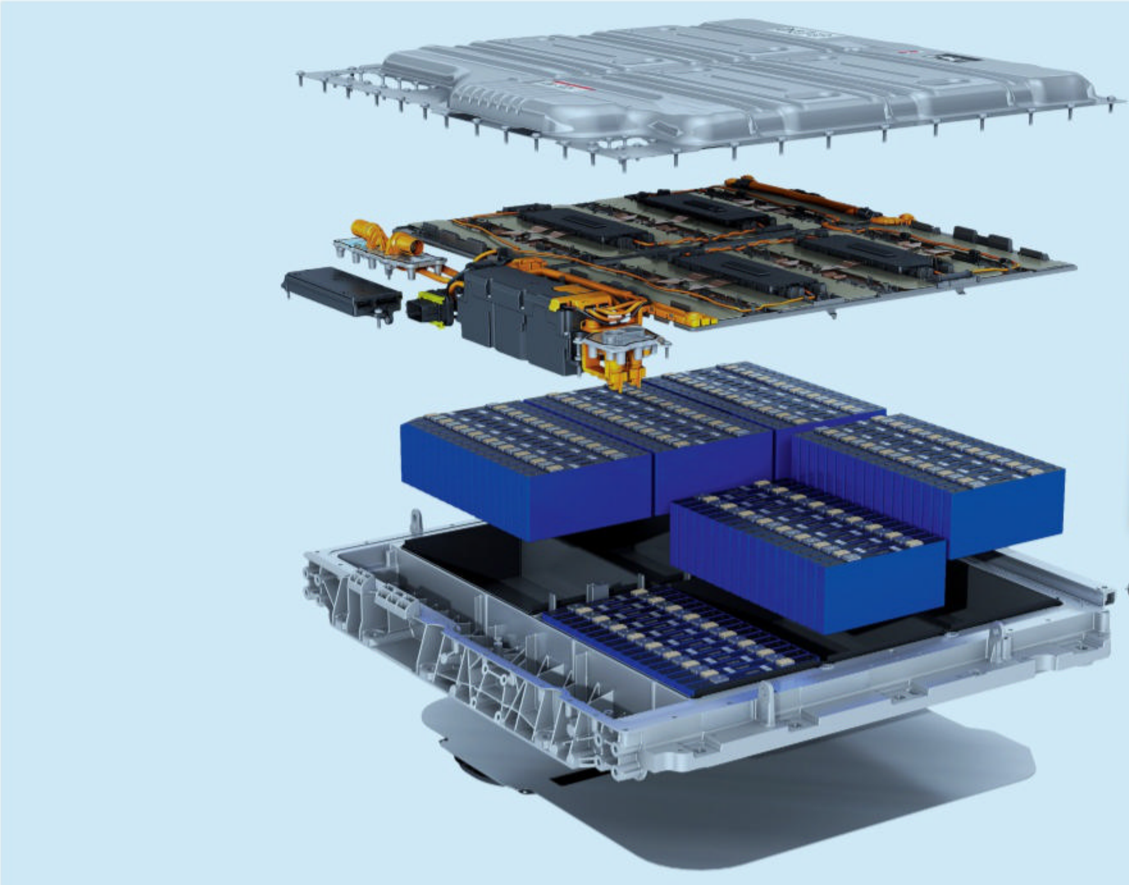
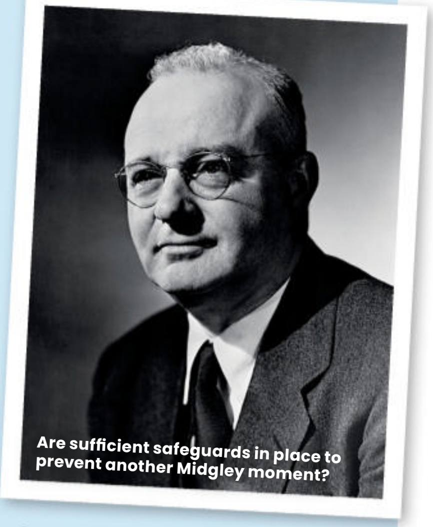
MATT SAUNDERS

Testing, testing





Are sufficient safeguards in place to prevent another Midgley moment?

The energy density of EV batteries has been growing exponentially

An old-fashioned hardback book often still beats the internet, doesn't it? When you can get hold of one. Right now, there's one, in a package with my name on it, stuck somewhere between a second-hand bookshop in Portland, Oregon, and the UK: the only published biography – that I can find – of Thomas Midgley Jr.

Once a figure of celebrated repute, Midgley is now just the answer to an increasingly obscure pub quiz question. He was primarily responsible for mixing lead with petrol in the 1920s; and then, in one of the 20th-century's most environmentally ruinous encores, for putting chlorofluorocarbons in refrigerators and air-conditioning systems in the 1930s. Imagine having both on your CV – and still making president of the American Chemical Society.

I've been particularly interested lately in the circumstances and context that gave rise to two of the most infamous chemical innovations of the past 100 years or so. Might there be parallels with those surrounding research into battery technology and synthetic fuels right now? Could the car be due another Midgley moment? Well, having reflected a bit on the subject, I'm relieved to have concluded that no, probably not.

The pressures on EVs – specifically in terms of battery technology, energy density and cost – seem, at first, to be comparable to those that gave rise to leaded petrol. The world has long forgotten what an obstacle to progress irregular combustion – engine knock – once was. The once burning issue prevented petrol engines from being small, powerful, efficient or reliable.

> **"Chemical research today must mostly be done by chemists"**

According to an article written by Mark Bernstein, Midgley experimented with more than 100 fuel additives in total. Iodine worked quite well. Aniline even better. But tetraethyl lead worked best of all – and that meant it could be dosed in petrol both efficiently and cheaply.

When 'ethyl' petrol appeared on US forecourts in 1923, it added only three cents to the cost of a gallon. It allowed petrol engines to run smoothly and reliably at then unprecedented compression ratios, and from there on out, not least with its impact on aircraft (fun fact: avgas aircraft fuel still widely has tetraethyl lead in it), it helped to shape the history of the 20th century.

Electric cars are already smooth and reliable, of course, but they are for now saddled with the acknowledged challenges of cost and range. But while they don't make atmospheric tailpipe emissions, that doesn't mean they could never be a threat to public health. However, the general naivety in the 1920s to the concept of atmospheric pollution clearly has no equal 100 years or so down the line.

Experience has taught me to treat with contempt the occasional bouts of hysteria arising in the media about EV crash and fire safety. When it comes to engineering and testing fundamentally safe products, whose batteries don't typically leak, degrade or explode, the car industry has already proven itself capable. The safeguards are in place. I don't think it's hubristic to imagine they will continue to work.

And as for the 'upstream' part of the equation – well, chemical research these days must, one assumes, mostly be done by trained chemists. Midgley wasn't one of those, rather a mechanical engineer by trade. Could that have been considered a red flag? Or have you just dyed your handkerchief again, Thomas?

According to Bernstein, our man had to be persuaded, at length, to do his research into 'Freon', and would most likely have been happier if left to pursue the synthetic alternatives to natural rubber for tyres, to which he devoted much of the rest of his career. That was a largely fruitless search, though – and CFCs made the cash registers ring.

Perhaps it's the very idea of 'the one big breakthrough' that the EV must avoid. Handy, since it seems to be content with lots of small ones. Solid state is close; new anode and cathode constructions, and nanotechnologies, are coming. The average volumetric energy density of lithium ion cells in EVs rose fivefold between 2010 and 2020 – and it's set to double again between now and 2030.

It's the kind of progress that clearly depends on a small army of mini-Midgleys out there right now, just doing their thing very competently and safely, with the right qualifications and without poisoning or harming anything or anyone.

Would they object to being called mini-Midgleys? Perhaps. But here's hoping we never learn any of their actual names.

HORSE SENSE

The Caterham Seven's ICE future is now assured thanks to a new engine. **MATT PRIOR** tries it out

PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN BRADSHAW

Caterham has been at a set of figurative crossroads for some time, pondering what will replace the Ford Sigma and Duratec engines it has been using for yonks.

Neither the Sigma, a 1.6-litre used in Caterham's Academy racing cars, nor the 2.0-litre Duratec, used in its road and fastest race cars, has been made for several years.

Caterham bought a batch of Sigma blocks and has been assembling completed engines using those and spare parts, but they will shortly run out. It still has considerable stock of complete Duratec engines – 1200 of them – but it doesn't believe Ford has used the unit in over four years.

Ultimately, both need replacing, but the Academy race car is a priority, so that's what's being addressed first.

The Academy series, designed for new race drivers, results in 34-40 Caterhams being built and raced per year. Over the past 30 years, more than 1400 people have become racers through the programme. The cars are mostly home-finished and all have to be road-registered.

At a literal crossroads, a Caterham isn't the world's most convenient vehicle: you sit a long way from its nose, low, and with iffy visibility. But in corporate terms, things are brighter. In Bob Laishley, the company has a CEO with decades of OEM experience and a vast contact book, although he modestly says that wasn't a necessity because it quickly became apparent that plenty of engine manufacturers would be happy to supply the company. Combustion engine production, even development, is in no danger of imminently ceasing. The conundrum has been finding an engine that fits, that's available, reliable and sufficiently light, and is priced correctly. Or, at least, correctly enough.

"We have searched high and low," says Laishley, and the answer has come from Horse, a relatively new joint venture between Renault and Geely that "is looking to sell engines". Horse has the capacity to make more than three million engines a year and wants automotive customers. Caterham has settled on its lightly turbocharged 1.3-litre four-cylinder, badged HR13DDT, made in Spain and already used in more than 20 models including the Renault Megane, Nissan Qashqai and Mercedes A-Class. So "it has been used in a number of cars and Horse has guaranteed supply well into the next decade", says Laishley.

In existing production cars, the HR13DDT unit

has standard outputs as little as 115bhp and as much as 160bhp, higher still where it's already used in saloon car racing.

It has 1332cc capacity, a 72.2mm by 81.3mm bore/stroke, an aluminium block and head, direct injection, twin overhead cams, a lifetime timing chain and mirror bore coating, in which cylinders receive approximately 0.2mm of friction-reducing coating rather than a cast-iron cylinder liner (the sort that has a circa 2mm wall thickness). It's tech the R35-generation Nissan GT-R received first and it gives "a lot of weight-saving in the block", says Laishley.

The upshot, I'm told, is that the HR13 engine weighs 35kg less than a Duratec motor (around 15-25kg less than a Sigma, by my estimates), although some of that will be undone by the need for an intercooler and associated pipework and ducting. Complete, it certainly won't weigh more than the Duratec, according to Laishley.

The final advantage is that "it fits", says Laishley, although these things are somewhat relative. Most of it fits. A fuel pump and rail sprouts from the top of the engine, which the Caterham bonnet will have to be sculpted to clear. It's a tiny piece of the engine but one of the most critical. Various teams have contemplated rejigging it, but that it pressurises petrol to 350 bar has inclined them to leave it as designed.

I've come to Brands Hatch, where it's binning down with rain, to try the first Caterham Horse prototype, an SV (wide-body) chassis in left-hand drive. The wider chassis gives Caterham's team a bit more space to work with, and the exhaust and catalytic converter would foul the steering column on a right-hand-drive model, so they're using this left-hooker while redesigning the exhaust. A second prototype, an Academy race car, which has a narrow (Series 3) chassis in right-hand drive – and is thus representative of the first production versions – is in build at the factory. I've seen some CAD mock-ups of the bonnet and the finished version will look much sleeker than the strictly functional add-on you see pictured here. It will want some additional cooling vents too.

Caterham's engineers say that beyond ensuring the engine fits, they have done precious little to it. It makes 130bhp at around 5750rpm and builds in very linear fashion from 2000rpm, with a very flat torque plateau of a little under 130lb ft from 2000rpm to 5500rpm (bhp and lb ft being equal at 5252rpm). The rev limit is 6500rpm but they say there's no need to take it there, because torque and power both ebb away after the peak.

Caterham will use its own ECU (it's more reliable than using an OEM ECU that requires "turning things off that don't want to be", says Laishley) and the base power might eventually go up or down a bit so that Academy race ▸

Laishley (right) tells Prior: "We've searched high and low" for the right engine

Overall, Horse-engined Sevens will not weigh more than today's Duratec ones

◂ cars retain lap times as close as possible to those of today's Sigma-engined cars.

In the meantime, there's plenty else to be getting on with. Not only will there be a new engine, but also a new gearbox and limited-slip differential. Gearboxes are becoming the latest six- rather than five-speed Mazda MX-5 units and there will be a bespoke Caterham-specced LSD in place of the BMW one used now. The gearbox is a bit heavier than the five-speed but the LSD is lighter, so overall weight is the same.

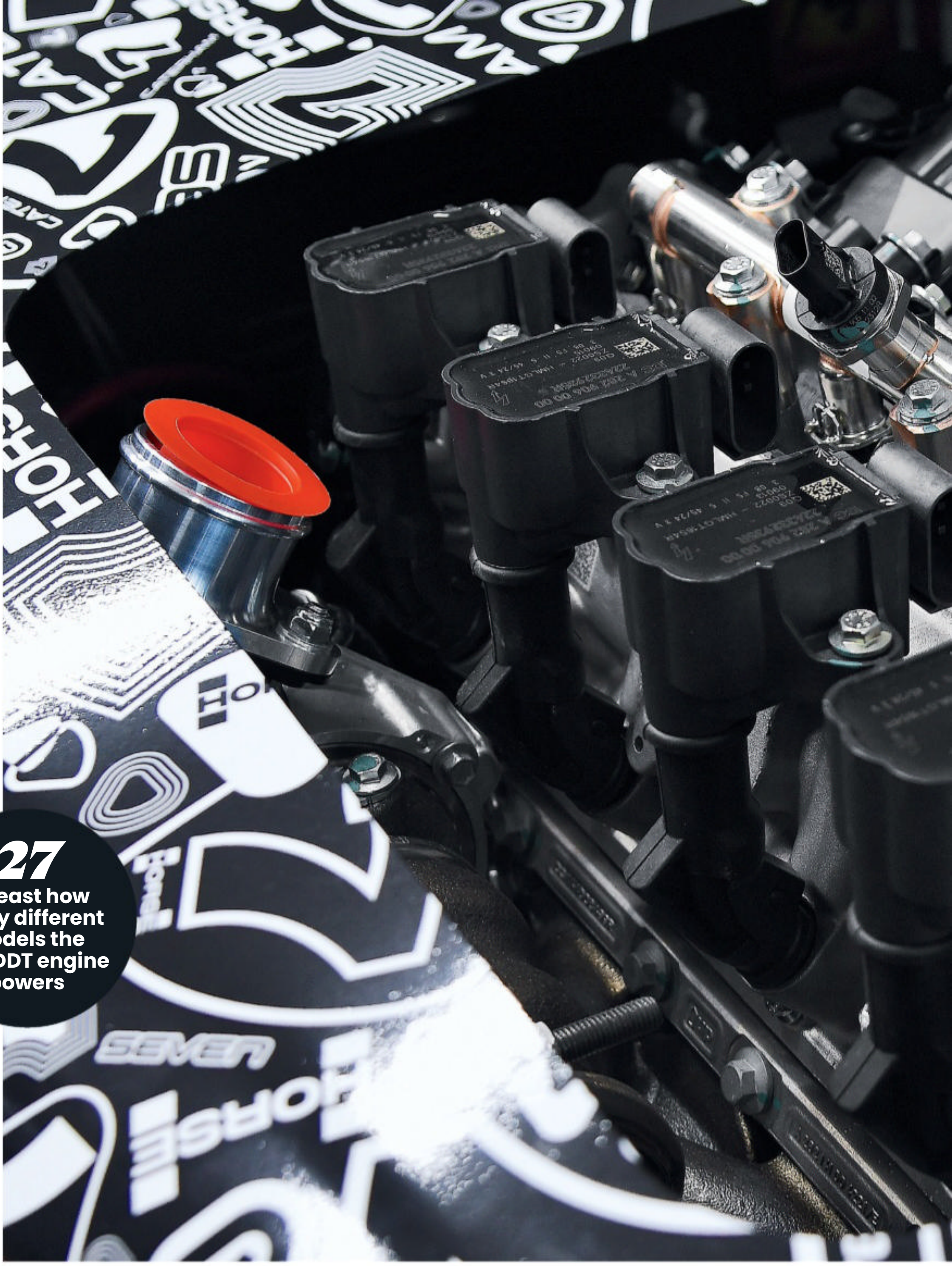
Because of the new engine, gearbox and differential, the 2026 set of Academy cars won't be available to home-build: the procedures simply won't be finely honed enough, so Caterham will complete them all at the factory. As I write, pricing has still to be confirmed, but I'm told it will be a little – but not prohibitively or mick-takingly – more expensive than a Sigma-engined car. The bits just cost more.

Those will be the first and, for the time being, only Horse-engined Caterhams. Historically, Academy cars typically become 'Roadsport Championship' race cars the year after they have competed in the Academy and then can be upgraded to 270 and 310 race cars thereafter: those championships, then, will have a mix of Horse and Sigma engines from 2028.

Entry-level 170s will still use the small Suzuki engine. Other road-going Caterhams will continue with Duratec engines until stocks run out. You can speculate that, with its various power options and obvious tuning capability, the Horse engine will become the norm thereafter: Caterham clearly hasn't signed up a new engine maker to build just 34 cars a year. The other point to note is that if you want to have a naturally aspirated Seven, the time is now.

Caterham would like the new engine to feel as naturally aspirated as is possible, though. So at Brands I sink into the driver's seat to receive a briefing, although there's not much to tell. There's a light to warn of the impending rev limiter, but unless I deliberately take it there, I'll have probably naturally felt the urge to shift up a gear by then. And while the sound is all authentic, there is a symposer (a tube and a vibrating membrane) to accentuate the induction noise.

By today's standards, 100bhp per litre is modest and so is a redline in the mid-6000s. That redline and power output are figures an old 1.7-litre Ford Kent Crossflow would be familiar with. And if I told you that the Horse engine



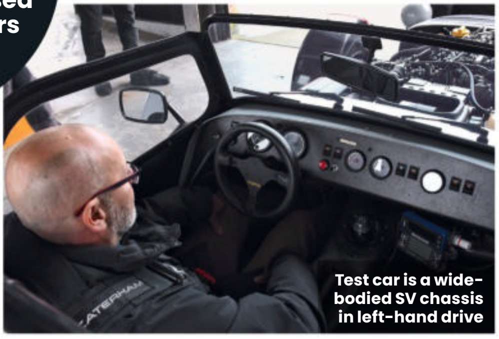
27
At least how many different models the HR13DDT engine powers

"There's sufficient response to light up the rear tyres out of Druids"

Horse 1.3 turbo engine delivers eager mid-range response. Note the protruding tubing

M282
How the engine is badged when used in Mercedes cars

This developmental addition will look sleeker in production


Test car is a wide-bodied SV chassis in left-hand drive

New engine's exhaust system is being repackaged

reminded me a bit of one of those, I wouldn't mean it as an insult.

This is, I don't think it's unkind to say, a functional rather than spectacular sort of engine. It will pull at any revs because it has modern electronics but there's notable response from 2000rpm and it pulls very keenly from 3000-5000rpm. If there is turbo lag, and even at low boost pressures I suppose there must be some, you don't really notice it in a car as light as a Seven. Perhaps it would be more notable in the dry, but in the wet there's sufficient response to light up the rear tyres out of Druids hairpin easily, and even in higher-speed corners enough to straighten the car's line without feeling like you're waiting for the engine to do your bidding. It's just linear, progressive and responsive, and I think the symposer takes the edge off some gravelliness, to add some gruff induction 'bwoap'.

It's geared for around 3000rpm at 60mph in sixth, and while it's hard to gauge how the large expanse of a race circuit totally matches the road, that and the ratios – with a gearshift every bit as tight and slick as the Mazda five-speed's – feels 'about right'.

In truth the whole package does. Would it be nicer if it was a super-light, naturally aspirated 1.6-litre that revved to 9000rpm and made 160bhp while it was getting there? Perhaps, but people don't make engines like that which meet regulatory requirements any more. The Horse engine hits the right numbers. And, in its delivery, in its responses, and even in its aural appeal, it largely hits the mark too. I think Academy drivers are going to have as much fun as ever. The future supply is pleasingly secure. And if you must have a naturally aspirated Seven, you know who to call. A

Caterham engines: a (very) brief history

Caterhams have been fitted with myriad engines since the company adopted the Lotus Seven as its own in 1972. The mainstay throughout the first half of its life was the Ford Crossflow, but there were high points like Lotus twin-cams too.

In the early 1990s, the top model became a Vauxhall HPC engine, a 2.0-litre unit that was heavy but made as much as 250bhp in the JPE (Jonathan Palmer Evolution), which had a 0-60mph time of 3.74sec (in Dr Palmer's hands) and a two-way 0-100-0mph time of 13.1sec. Caterham experimented with turbocharged engines in this era but was never happy with them (and nor could they be easily cooled). There are some bike-engined Sevens too, mostly unofficial, but buzzy and unsuited to pulling half a tonne, they never quite satisfied either.

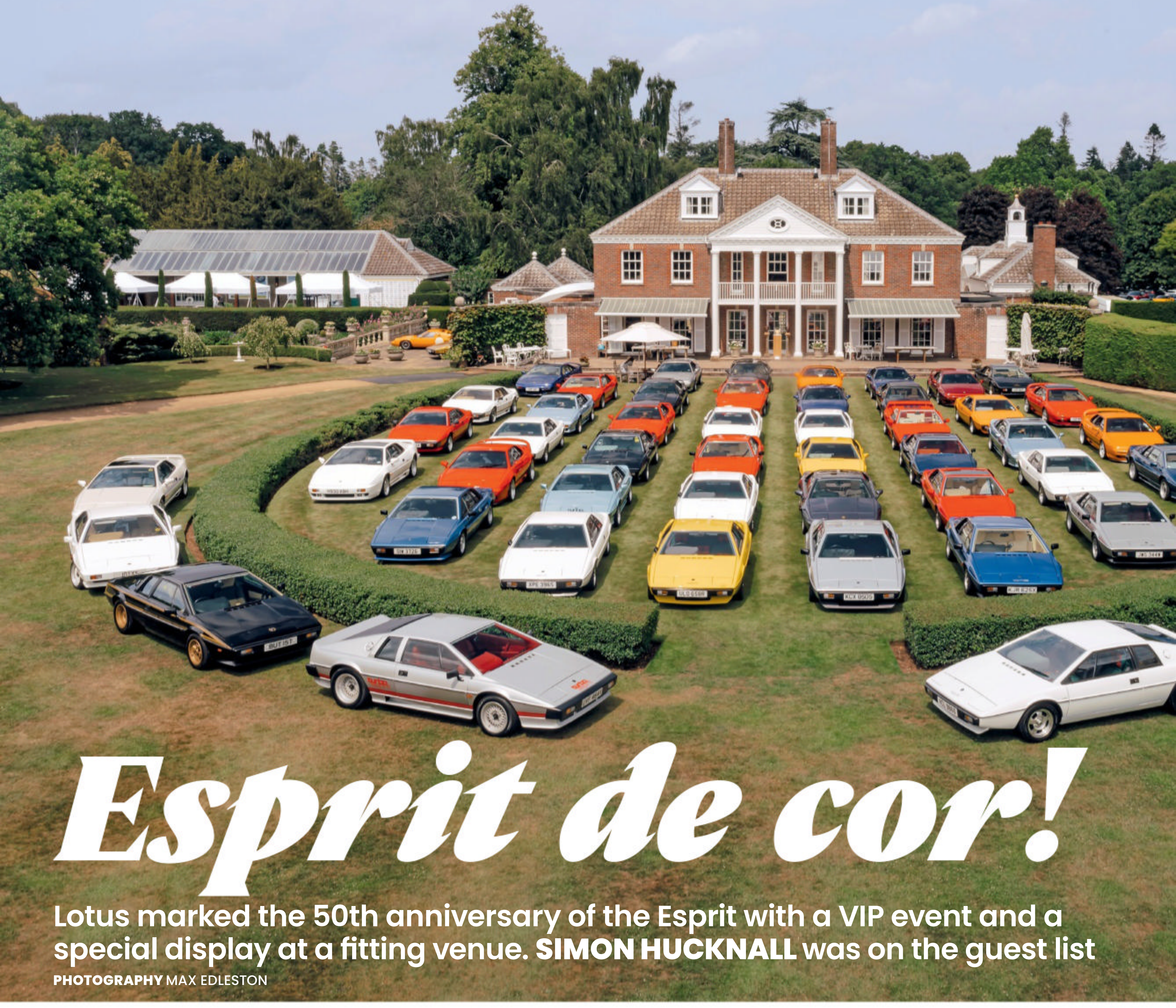
Rover's light, revvy K-series engine followed the Kent and Vauxhall units, offering a vast range of power outputs, from near-stock early 1.4s through to ones persuaded to make as much as 230bhp.

Ford's Sigma engines later underpinned the bottom of the Seven range while Duratec engines have provided a way to reach big power outputs (via revving or supercharging), with Suzuki's 660cc triple in the 160, now badged 170, introducing a turbocharged era and slotting underneath even the Sigma, while meeting Japanese kei-car regulations.

Esprit de cor!

Lotus marked the 50th anniversary of the Esprit with a VIP event and a special display at a fitting venue. SIMON HUCKNALL was on the guest list

PHOTOGRAPHY MAX EDLESTON



We think of the Porsche 911 as being the stalwart of the junior supercar world, but after 28 years and more than 10,000 sales, the Lotus Esprit in all its guises was probably the closest contender. And this year marks half a century since it broke cover at the 1975 Paris motor show, where its radical Giorgetto Giugiaro-designed shape was revealed in production form for the first time. Overseen by Colin Chapman and a small team from Hethel, the Esprit went on to be Lotus's first proper Ferrari challenger. Its four-cylinder engine and initially meagre output were mitigated by a sublime chassis, a sub-900kg kerb weight and bar-raising mid-engined dynamics.

So it is only right that Lotus – or rather Classic Team Lotus – has seen fit to celebrate the Esprit's 50th birthday at its annual Garden Party, held in the manicured gardens of East Carleton Manor, former home of the late Colin and Hazel Chapman and a stone's throw from Lotus's HQ.

Of all the 50 (of course) Esprits gathered on East Carleton Manor's lawns, there are just a handful of S1 cars, the purest exponent of the original 'Silver Car' concept's acutely wedge-shaped lines. Giugiaro is seated near one, with his interpreter, and I ask about his relationship with Colin Chapman: was there a language barrier? Giugiaro smiles back and replies: "Drawing was our common language."

Engines fire up behind us, and I turn to see a mouthwatering selection of Colin Chapman's 1960s single-seat race cars being driven out on to the manor's front drive. There's Jim Clark's Type 18, Type 32B and Type 35, among a few others. Clive Chapman, Colin's son, has just returned in one of them and I ask him why the Esprit is so important in Lotus folklore.

"Dad was always looking forward. He saw what other companies were doing and wanted to raise Lotus's game," he replies. "We had gone from the Elan to the Esprit, but this extraordinary car still had (the Elan's) handling characteristics… so you had your foot in both camps."

Wandering around the gathered Esprits gives you a measure of how Lotus sweated the model for all it was worth with, by my reckoning, 22 derivatives produced during its life – possibly even more. As well as the S1s, all the models from different designers are represented – X180 (Peter Stevens), S4 (Julian Thomson) and last-of-line V8 (Russell Carr) – plus special editions like the black and gold Esprit JPS and blue, red and silver Esprit Essex, both referencing Lotus's F1 ties.

And what do we find in the manor's swimming pool? Naturally, James Bond's Esprit sub – aka 'Wet Nellie' – from the 1977 film The Spy Who Loved Me. In fact, it's what looks to be a half-scale model, with the actual full-sized prop at the poolside, in front of the Turbo Esprit from the 1981 Bond film For Your Eyes Only.

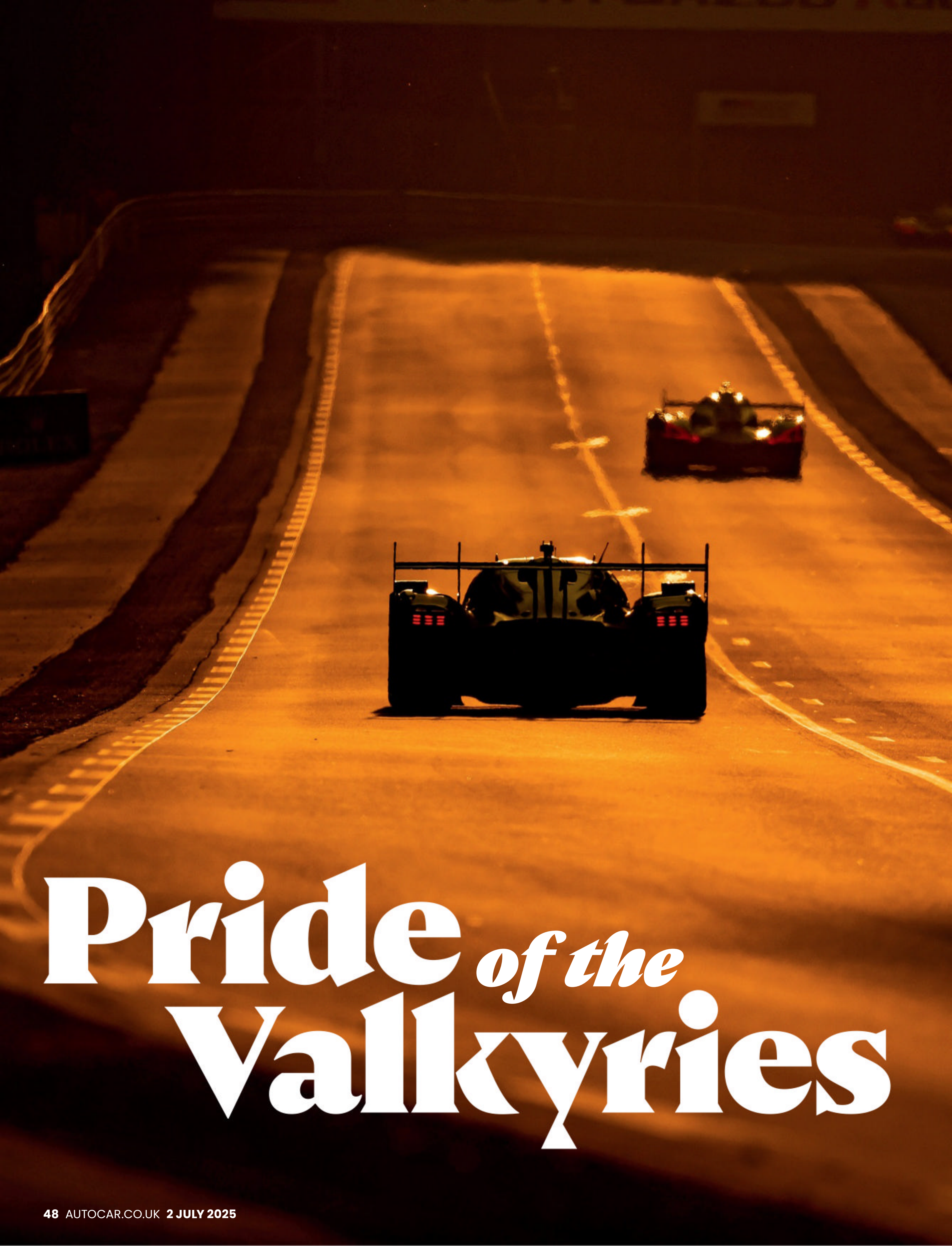
As I leave the event, heads are turned towards Giugiaro, who is now sitting in an S1 parked next to Lotus's 2024 Theory 1 concept car (pictured, bottom right). In 50 years' time, I only hope that car will prove as influential to Lotus's future as the Esprit was in 1975.

"We got the car into The Spy Who Loved Me," recalls ex-Lotus boss Mike Kimberley, "by parking the red prototype so that 'Cubby' Broccoli had to more or less trip over it. After the premiere, every young person had a poster of that white Esprit."

Giorgetto Giugiaro admits there were challenges designing the Esprit: "This was my first glassfibre car. I didn't have the knowledge with glassfibre technology. These are the surprises you have when you move from prototype to production."

Clive Chapman believes the Esprit was a genuine game-changer for Lotus: "Name me another car that has Chapman, Giugiaro, Stevens, Thomson and Carr… It's not by accident that it became so popular and so enduring."

Peter Stevens refreshed Giugiaro's original shape: "When we finished the exterior, I said to Mike [Kimberley] we've got to do something with the interior and he said: 'There's only £12k left in the budget, so you better do it for that!'"



Pride *of the* Valkyries

Aston Martin returned to Le Mans' top tier after 14 years away and finished the race with plenty to feel positive about. **JAMES ATTWOOD** gets the inside story

Thanks to the glorious wail of a non-hybridised Cosworth V12, the pair of Aston Martin Valkyrie AMR-LMH racers sounded utterly glorious as they powered through the French countryside. So while the British firm was never going to win the Le Mans 24 Hours on its return to the endurance classic's top class for the first time in 14 years, it simply couldn't be ignored.

There are no prizes for fielding the best-sounding cars on the grid but this year wasn't about trophies. It was about proving that a racing hypercar based on a road-going version could work. Some patience was always going to be required: the performance-balancing measures of Le Mans' current rules make it nearly impossible for a new team to be a contender straight away.

Then again, Aston Martin has had to learn patience when it comes to Le Mans. The British marque first entered the race in 1928 but it wasn't until 1959 that Roy Salvadori and Carroll Shelby took victory in a DBR1/300. And it's still waiting for overall victory number two.

There has been success at the Circuit de la Sarthe more recently. Aston Martin triumphed in the GT1 class with a DBR9 in 2007 and it has won the top GT class on four more occasions. But its most recent bid for outright victory came with the best-forgotten Lola-Aston Martin B09 project from 2009 until 2011.

The current hypercar regulations in endurance racing's top flight have made Le Mans hugely appealing for manufacturers and this year Aston Martin joined a very full paddock. But by choosing to turn the Valkyrie into a Le Mans Hypercar (LMH), the British firm has made life hard for itself. It is the only entrant in the hypercar class to be based on a road-legal vehicle, and the Adrian Newey-designed 'Formula 1 car for the road' is so extreme the road car's engine had to be detuned and its aerodynamics blunted to fit the rules.

Aston Martin could, like Ferrari, Toyota and Peugeot, have designed its LMH as a pure race car; or, like Porsche, BMW and Alpine, made life even easier by using a spec chassis and hybrid system as the basis for a cost-controlled Le Mans Daytona Hybrid (LMDh) racer. But as Aston Martin endurance racing boss Adam Carter says: "If we did that, it wouldn't be an Aston Martin."

"We developed the Valkyrie because it was the ultimate hypercar," adds Carter, who works for Aston Martin Performance Technologies, which is based alongside the F1 team. "The Valkyrie was born to race; its foundations came from racing. Aston Martin is a sports car company. We build sports cars. And there's nothing better than when a sports car goes to race at Le Mans."

The Valkyrie's road to Le Mans hasn't been straightforward. In fact, it has taken four years longer than first planned. In a press conference to launch the forthcoming LMH rules at Le Mans in 2019, Aston joined Toyota in announcing that it would begin racing the Valkyrie in the 2020/2021 World Endurance Championship.

The delay is partly because of Aston Martin's financial struggles, the takeover by Lawrence Stroll and a subsequent restructuring. But it's also because of changes in the hypercar rules. When the firm initially committed, the LMH rules were for cars based on road-going hypercars. But as part of an agreement to equalise performance between the World Endurance Championship LMH and LMDh cars, that requirement was dropped, prompting Aston Martin to scrap its plans.

But the Le Mans 24 Hours has a way of pulling people in and the project was revived in October 2023 with the help of US-based motorsport team The Heart of Racing and manufacturing experts Multimatic. The race car was built and run by a squad consisting of staff from those firms.

"[Aston Martin owner Lawrence] Stroll asked me about turning the Valkyrie into a hypercar so I went and looked at the regulations, spoke to officials and said: 'Yeah, absolutely it's possible.' But it's been a journey for everyone involved, including the regulatory bodies. A good journey, but a long journey," says Carter. ▸

Astons were up against Porsche, Toyota, Ferrari, Peugeot, BMW, Alpine…

Valkyrie #007 came 14th, six laps down, and #009 finished 12th, four laps back

GETTY IMAGES

The base car is technically the track-only Valkyrie AMR Pro, which shortcuts some of the development. But that car produces more than 1000bhp from its hybridised 6.5-litre naturally aspirated V12 Cosworth, whereas the LMH rules peg output at 670bhp. But as Carter says: "The Valkyrie would not be the Valkyrie without that V12. It's absolutely the heart of the car."

He adds: "It's got way more capacity than we need so we can run it very lean burn, and it's a great, efficient demonstration of future sustainable fuels."

So the hybrid element was ditched – anyway it drives the rear wheels on the road car yet LMH rules require it to power the front axle – and the Cosworth unit was effectively detuned, although Carter says that helps to offset any loss of torque resulting from the lack of electrification. The challenge of LMH is that to emphasise efficiency, the cars are essentially set torque-based energy output parameters that they must stick within. Hybrids can help with that, which perhaps explains why every hypercar on the grid bar the Aston Martin runs one.

"Every race car is a collection of compromises and always will be," says Carter. "Having a hybrid presents some opportunities around torque filling, but the V12 has a very high torque response. If you have a hybrid, you have to synchronise it with the combustion unit, whereas our response is all built into one unit."

The bodywork of the Valkyrie racer has also been revised to fit the LMH class's aero rules (remember, Newey's joy in crafting the Valkyrie was not having to work to a rulebook…) while also ensuring the bodywork at the front and rear met motorsport safety rules and could be quickly changed if required.

The Heart of Racing has run a pair of Valkyries in both the IMSA and WEC series this year. The results haven't been spectacular, but they were never going to be because of the Balance of Performance (BoP) regulations.

This is where the story gets a little tricky to tell, because the first rule of BoP is you don't talk about BoP. Okay, it's technically not the first rule, but race organisers want to keep the focus on the track rather than a verbal fight club in the paddock, so competitors are banned from moaning about BoP.

But you can read between the lines, and because it is calculated on reference data and

ASTON MARTIN
THE HEART OF RACING
ASTON MARTIN
THOR TEAM
MICHELIN

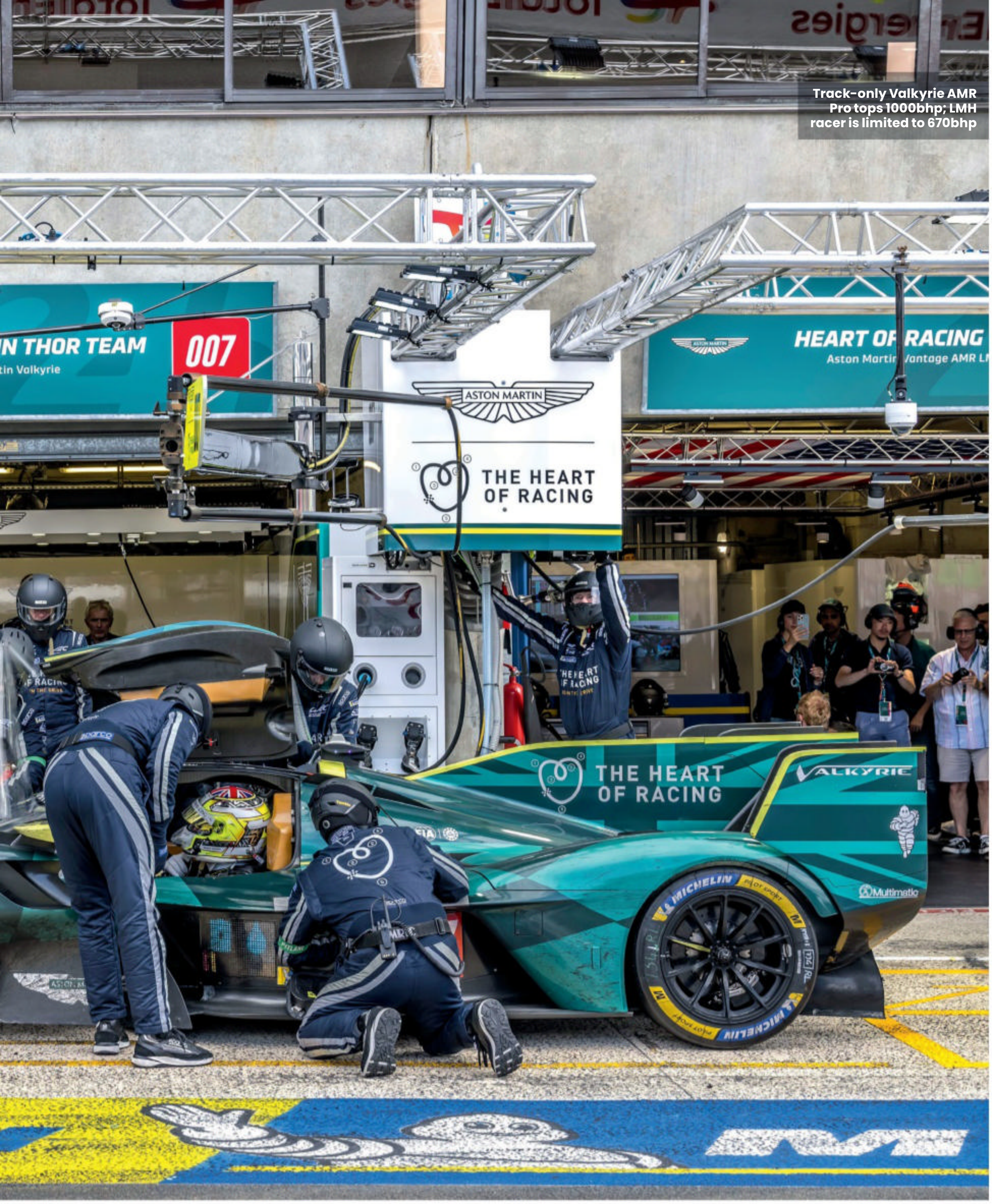
Basing the race car on the Valkyrie road car was not the easiest option

Unlike rivals, the Valkyrie LMH employs no hybrid element, just an atmo V12

Aston Martin is in its first hypercar season; many rivals are in their third

THE HEART OF RACING
US-based motorsport team The Heart of Racing is integral to the project

Astons also ran in the GT3 category; both Vantage AMRs made it to the finish



Track-only Valkyrie AMR Pro tops 1000bhp; LMH racer is limited to 670bhp

WHAT ABOUT ASTON IN F1?

Why is Aston Martin racing at Le Mans? It's a question CEO Adrian Hallmark has pondered, especially since the project was signed off before he joined the firm. And as he puts it: "The media awareness of Le Mans is pretty niche, and that's being kind." But he adds: "It hasn't got the glamour of F1 but it's the most challenging, brutal sport with four wheels. It's 16 F1 races in a day: that's the scale of the challenge."

Hallmark is in a position to compare the two since Aston also competes in F1 – and this weekend it will be on home ground for the British Grand Prix. In fact, home ground undersells it: the F1 team is based at Silverstone, over the road from the track entrance.

It has not been the easiest of seasons for Aston's F1 team so far: Lance Stroll scored in the opening two races but at the time of writing has been out of the points since then, while Fernando Alonso was forced to wait until the ninth round of the year, in Spain, to score his first points. That leaves the team well down the order, especially after a strong showing in 2024.

Still, British fans will find lots of interest this weekend, with Lando Norris chasing a home win for McLaren and Lewis Hamilton racing at Silverstone in a Ferrari for the first time.

"Aston Martin's concept has been proven and the future is bright"

new entrants have none, they start with the worst possible BoP. The calculations for the high-speed Le Mans track are also done separately from other events. So the unspoken belief is that the Valkyrie should be more competitive next year when any BoP measures are based on actual past performance.

But that's fine, because the team still needed to learn. The hypercar programme was deliberately staffed without impacting the ongoing GT project and Carter says: "It's a learning year and we need to learn and refine our processes as a team. It's a new group of people with vast experience brought together. We need to learn the car, and about the regulations, and how to get the most out of the car. We've focused on race pace and reliability, but we need to learn more about one-lap pace.

"A number of our competitors have been through two cycles of learning, and they're now in their third. We're on our first. Our learning curve is steeper from theirs."

And there was more promise in the results than the numbers might suggest. Getting one of the Valkyries into the 'hyperpole' qualifying session for the top 15 cars was a mighty achievement, and in the race both cars ran reliably and consistently to 12th and 14th places, four and six laps down on the winning Ferrari respectively. But it was an unusual year, with relatively little attrition among the hypercars.

The most important thing, though, is that Aston Martin was in the race and the unusual non-hybrid hypercar based on an actual road car held its own against bespoke competition. The concept has been proven and the future is bright. The current hypercar field is too large and deep to suggest that Aston is on track for that elusive second Le Mans victory, but it's undoubtedly closer than it has been for decades.

And even if Aston Martin has to wait a few more years, we can enjoy that glorious engine note while it does.

Adam Carter: "Our learning curve is steeper than our competitors'"

GETTY IMAGES

All fare in love and war

Is the London black cab being squeezed out of existence by Uber, TfL and costs? **JOHN EVANS** reports

According to my phone, Taxi House, headquarters of the Licensed Taxi Drivers' Association (LTDA) on Great Suffolk Street, London, E1, is just a 15-minute walk from Waterloo station, where I'm located. I'm due to meet Steve McNamara, the association's general secretary, there and although shanks's pony is more appealing, I ought to take one of his member's black cabs. It will be a chance to find out what a taxi ride costs these days and to grill the driver about life as a cabbie. He won't be cracking jokes…

There's a big debate going on about the future of London's cabs. In March, a report by the Centre for London warned that on current trends, the trade could disappear from the capital's streets within as little as 20 years. The reasons, it said, include the Covid epidemic, which saw many drivers quit, and the rapid growth in private hire vehicles led by Uber (96,000 compared with 14,500 taxis). In addition, it highlighted the "substantial increase" in the costs of purchasing and operating the new LEVC TX range-extender taxis and the ending of the taxi scrappage scheme and recent reduction in the new taxi purchase grant. It also referenced the challenge posed to driver recruitment by the notoriously tough Knowledge of London, the list of routes that aspiring taxi drivers must learn.

On a more optimistic note, the report's release coincided with the publication by Transport for London (TfL) of a 14-point plan to support the taxi trade and private hire vehicles over the next five years. Recognising that the capital's taxis "play a vital role in London's green and sustainable transport network", it promised to ensure that taxis continue to have access to bus lanes wherever possible, to tackle cross-border hiring (the practice of taxis operating outside their licensed areas), to improve the training offered to taxi drivers and to make the Knowledge less intimidating, among other action. It also pledged to push the government for a continuation of the plug-in taxi grant, to reduce VAT at public charge points and to remove the tax from the purchase price of taxis.

So my cab driver should have a lot to talk about, but first I need to find him or her, a job that takes all of 30 seconds. Uber's app may have revolutionised hailing a private hire car but it can't beat just jumping into the nearest available taxi.

"We've been shafted by the 20mph limit and the fact we can't go down low-traffic neighbourhood roads so can't take a passenger, who may be disabled, door to door," its driver tells me. "Taxis should be allowed to go everywhere a bus can but some routes like Tottenham Court Road we can't enter. So we take the road running parallel to it but it has two cycle lanes that makes it narrower and costs journey time. A typical £15 journey three years ago now costs £25. TfL is trying to get rid of us."

If that's true, why has 21-year-old Mohamed B, London's newest and youngest taxi driver, become one? We were planning to interview Mo for this story but he cancelled at the last moment on the grounds that all he had to say he'd already said in his employer's video publicising his success.

The Covid lockdown may have forced a lot of taxi drivers out of the trade, but Mo explains in the film that this was exactly the stimulus he needed to become one himself. With time on his hands, aged 17, he knuckled down to learning the Knowledge. Two years later, he'd passed all the tests but had to wait until he was 21 to get his licence. "I'm having the best time," he says.

Even the taxi driver who took me to Taxi House admits that, despite everything, he "loves" the job. Will McNamara be as sanguine? "We've had taxis since Cromwell's day and London will always have them," he tells me in the back of a taxi he's magically summoned from nowhere. "I'm optimistic about that because we're sitting in the cleanest and 100% wheelchair accessible taxi in the world, driven by the most highly regulated and trained cab drivers in the world. But the driver you spoke to is right: TfL's war on motorists is also being waged on taxis. On top of that, you've got a taxi which, by the time you've financed it, can cost up to £100,000. It's tough."

In spite of these challenges, McNamara reckons the green shoots of a recovery are emerging. "Demand for taxi rides is growing as workers begin returning to their offices," he says. "We're also seeing the return of younger customers we thought we'd lost to the private hire apps but who have become blasé about the hailing technology. The fares are no longer cheap, either. People can do a journey in the back of a Prius for £10 or in a taxi, a cab they can stop on the street without waiting, for just £2 more. It's cool being seen getting in and out of a London cab too. Numbers may be down but the trade will still be here in 40 years, never mind 20." ■

£4.80
The difference between what Evans paid for his taxi ride (£14.80) and what he'd have paid in an Uber X (£10). Going by six-seat Uber XL would have been 60p dearer than by his six-seat taxi.

Mohamed B is London's youngest cabbie. Uber rides (top) are slightly cheaper

A CLEAN BREAK

As London's diesel-powered black cabs come to the end of their life, they've been superseded since 2017 by the LEVC TX, a cleaner and more comfortable taxi that pairs an EV powertrain with petrol range-extender tech. Today, there are just under 9000 TXs operating in London, amounting to 60% of the city's taxi fleet, and LEVC expects to sell up to 1000 taxis this year in the capital and other UK cities.

A new TX costs £66,400, although in light of the reduction in various government grants, LEVC has not increased its prices since 2023. To further sweeten the deal, selected LEVC retailers are currently offering five years' free servicing and warranty cover, while from June there will be a £5000 scrappage offer on older diesel models.

LTDA general secretary McNamara (right): "London will always have taxis"

JOHN BRADSHAW

LIVING WITH A...

Where our long-term test cars have been and what they've done

"Eighteen months after launch, it still feels a very creditable option"

FINAL REPORT **MILEAGE 8765**

RENAULT SCENIC

In the EV world, you're never on top for long. Was this car the exception?

WHY WE RAN IT To see if the 2024 Car of the Year really is the standout family electric SUV on the market

From its days as an MPV, to a trendy crossover with big wheels, and now to its current evolution as a large hatchback, there is always more of a story attached to the Renault Scenic and less predictability about it than you would expect from the familiarity of its name.

This fifth-generation Scenic outwardly seemed the least remarkable Scenic yet launched. It is now effectively a bigger version of the Megane hatchback, with five seats and a boot and no interior MPV trickery at all.

Other than being electric, it was hard to pin down what this new Scenic's 'thing' was. And given the volume of new EVs entering the market, being electric is no longer a point of difference. To succeed without the trickery, this Scenic needed to be a very good car to drive, and to live with, in a very competitive class.

Its 2024 Car of the Year title was a good omen. As one of the COTY jurors, I got to sit through many presentations on it and followed its latter stage of development closely.

My first impressions of the car from those early encounters in 2023 have stuck with me and I'd still say the same thing now: it feels like a nice, relaxing car to drive every day, and the interior is a real standout feature. It feels fresh and modern inside and out, and switching to mass-market appeal seems to have paid off for the Scenic.

Our version of the Scenic E-Tech no longer exists, the Iconic having morphed into the Iconic Esprit Alpine. This has given the Scenic some sportier trim and a lower list price. Our plush test car was previously the best-specced Scenic not called Esprit Alpine – a stand-alone trim – and was equipped with the bigger, 87kWh battery (a 60kWh pack is also offered).

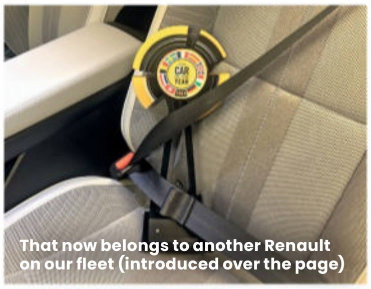
It came with bigger 20in wheels than the standard 19in wheels of the entry-level Techno model, and the ride did have a habit of kicking you every now and then. Throughout all our experiences with the Scenic, it has been a quieter, more comfortable and more fluent car to drive on smaller wheels, and up there with the class best in this form.

In our flavour, it is beaten by a Skoda Elroq for driving fluency, yet the Scenic hits back with that interior and greater desirability. We told you it was a competitive class.

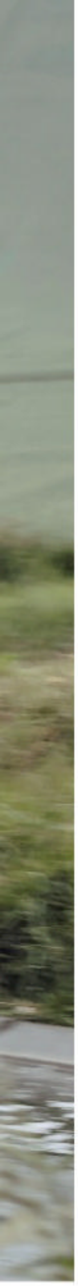
The Scenic's range was hugely varied. It dropped to around 220 miles in the coldest weather but surpassed 350 miles on warm days. Weather and driving conditions do affect the range of electric cars but

SECOND OPINION

The Scenic looks great, but it's the interior that stood out for me. Comfortable seats, Google infotainment, physical buttons – three winners. The driving position was hampered somewhat by the underfloor battery, though. Regardless, I'm happy to recommend it. **WR**



That now belongs to another Renault on our fleet (introduced over the page)



It's an easygoing car to drive in daily use and its design still looks fresh

Stylish cabin gives it an edge over rivals. Shame about the window rattle

We got close to the claimed range in summer, but nowhere near in winter

These bigger 20in wheels give Scenic some presence but don't help the ride

the gap between best and worst in the Scenic was disconcertingly vast.

Usefully the car did indicate its maximum and minimum range expectations based on the current charge on the driver display. Charging speeds were reliably up near the 150kW maximum, too, and the car still comfortably conquered some big-mileage trips from its London base, to North Yorkshire in one direction and southern Belgium in the other, without its driver suffering any range or charging anxiety.

The volume of correspondence we receive about a car on our fleet shows what people not only like but also care about. A recent report (11 June) covered some reader messages that followed a 'it's good, but…' theme, as that's how most conversations go about the Scenic. More emails have since landed suggesting more improvements, all from a position that it is liked and a good car to begin with.

Those 'buts' include software issues, ranging from problems with the memory seat to the Apple CarPlay voice control not ever working, and glaring omissions: there doesn't seem to be a warning that the windscreen washer fluid is running low, which I thought might just have been me until reader Ian Briscoe got back in touch to say the same about his Scenic. The build quality was also a bit iffy in places, the driver's side window being a rattler.

Do I miss the Scenic now it's gone, and following an extended period of time running it? Not really, but not because of those gremlins and not because the Scenic is a bad car – it's far from it. It's more a reflection of electric car development in general, and how quickly the segment moves.

It's easy to be a magpie in this game and be drawn to the shiniest new thing, even more so when you're dealing with a class in which every single brand is launching a car of the Scenic's exact size and type. Most are competent, too, and a cop-out piece of advice would be to buy one of the class's strongest contenders (Scenic, Elroq, Kia EV3, Ford Explorer, Hyundai Ioniq 5) you can get the best deal on or from a local dealer you know you can trust.

To the Scenic's credit, 18 months after launch (a surprisingly long time in the world of mainstream EVs), it still feels a very creditable option, and has a real freshness to it. Its styling hasn't aged at all and the interior remains at the sharp end of the class.

I imagine a facelift in around 18 months' time will iron out many of the wrinkles and help the Scenic raise the bar again. Despite the sheer number of entrants in the mainstream family hatchback EV market, the class still awaits its standout option, but the Scenic remains one of the best of the breed, depending on your preferences.

MARK TISSHAW

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE
mark.tisshaw@haymarket.com

TEST DATA

RENAULT SCENIC E-TECH ICONIC LONG RANGE

MILEAGE

At start 2011
At end 8765

PRICES

List price new £45,495
List price now £42,195
(Iconic Esprit Alpine trim)
Price as tested £46,745

OPTIONS

Midnight Blue metallic paint £1250

ECONOMY AND RANGE

Claimed range 369 miles
Battery 91.0/87.0kWh (total/usable)
Test average 3.5mpkWh
Test best 4.1mpkWh
Test worst 2.5mpkWh
Real-world range 305 miles
Max charge rate 150kW

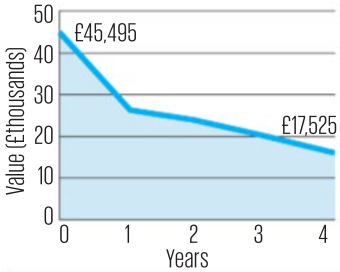
TECH HIGHLIGHTS

0-62mph 8.6sec
Top speed 93mph
Engine Separately excited synchronous motor
Max power 215bhp at 5473-11,688rpm
Max torque 221lb ft at 100-4714rpm
Gearbox 1-spd reduction gear, FWD
Boot 545 litres
Wheels 8.5Jx20in
Tyres 235/45 R20, Michelin e-Primacy
Kerb weight 1853kg

SERVICE AND RUNNING COSTS

Contract hire rate £430 pcm
CO_2 0g/km
Service costs None (Renault HQ serviced the car for its one-year service while diagnosing an Apple CarPlay fault)
Other costs None
Fuel costs £574.29
Running costs including fuel £574.29
Cost per mile 9 pence
Faults Apple CarPlay voice control failed

DEPRECIATION

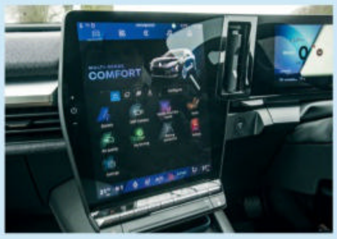


PREVIOUS REPORTS

19 Mar, 2 Apr, 16 Apr, 30 Apr, 14 May, 28 May, 11 Jun, 18 Jun

LOVE IT

INTERIOR DESIGN
I loved the light fabric and trim. It made the car feel really fresh and modern, lifting it above mainstream rivals in this area.



GOOGLE INFOTAINMENT
Much like the hardware around it, the software and UX inside the Scenic was generally excellent, all powered by Google.

WARM-WEATHER RANGE
Weather and driving style seem to affect battery performance more than in rivals. A good thing on the hot days we've had lately.

LOATHE IT

NARROW BOOT
The rear lights and wheel arches seem to encroach on boot space way more than normal. Longer golf clubs had to be flipped to fit.

BUGS AND NIGGLES
Apple CarPlay glitches, omitted kit and some rattles undermined the overall package. All fixable, yet it cheapened the product.

FIRST REPORT

RENAULT 5

We simply had to get our hands on our EV as soon as our ship came in

WHY WE'RE RUNNING IT To discover if Renault's retro-infused EV hit is as good to live with as it is to look at

We could wait no longer. When we found out the latest addition to our fleet, a new Renault 5, had been built at the firm's Douai plant in France and was en route to the UK, we had to get our hands on it as soon as humanly possible. So we decided to intercept the ship.

Our 5 arrived in the UK, like thousands of cars do every day, at Royal Portbury Dock in Avonmouth near Bristol – and, helpfully for logistics, 15 minutes from my mum's house. Which made me the ideal collection driver after we learned the ship containing our car would dock very early on a Monday morning. And while our 5 has been earmarked for Steve Cropley, I'd yet to try one so happily volunteered.

Once you clear security and enter the port, it is a car spotter's paradise akin to Kensington in London. Except that while Kensington is wall-to-wall supercars, everywhere you look within the port are random unregistered new cars, many SUVs from Chinese firms you've barely heard of.

Renault has a dedicated processing facility run by BCA and it's surrounded by a vast car park that on my arrival was largely empty. It wouldn't be that way for long, because a massive transporter had just arrived and several minibuses of stevedores were en route to drive cars off it.

Time is money in the port business, especially because the tidal nature of Royal Portbury Dock meant that if the ship wasn't unloaded (of cars arriving in the UK) and then loaded (with cars and vans being exported) in time for the high tide, it might be stuck there for another day. So I was informed I couldn't mess around.

By the time I walked through the ship's massive cargo door, several of the vast transporter's six decks had been cleared, but on the down ramp ahead of me were a row of 5s. And ours was right at the front of it.

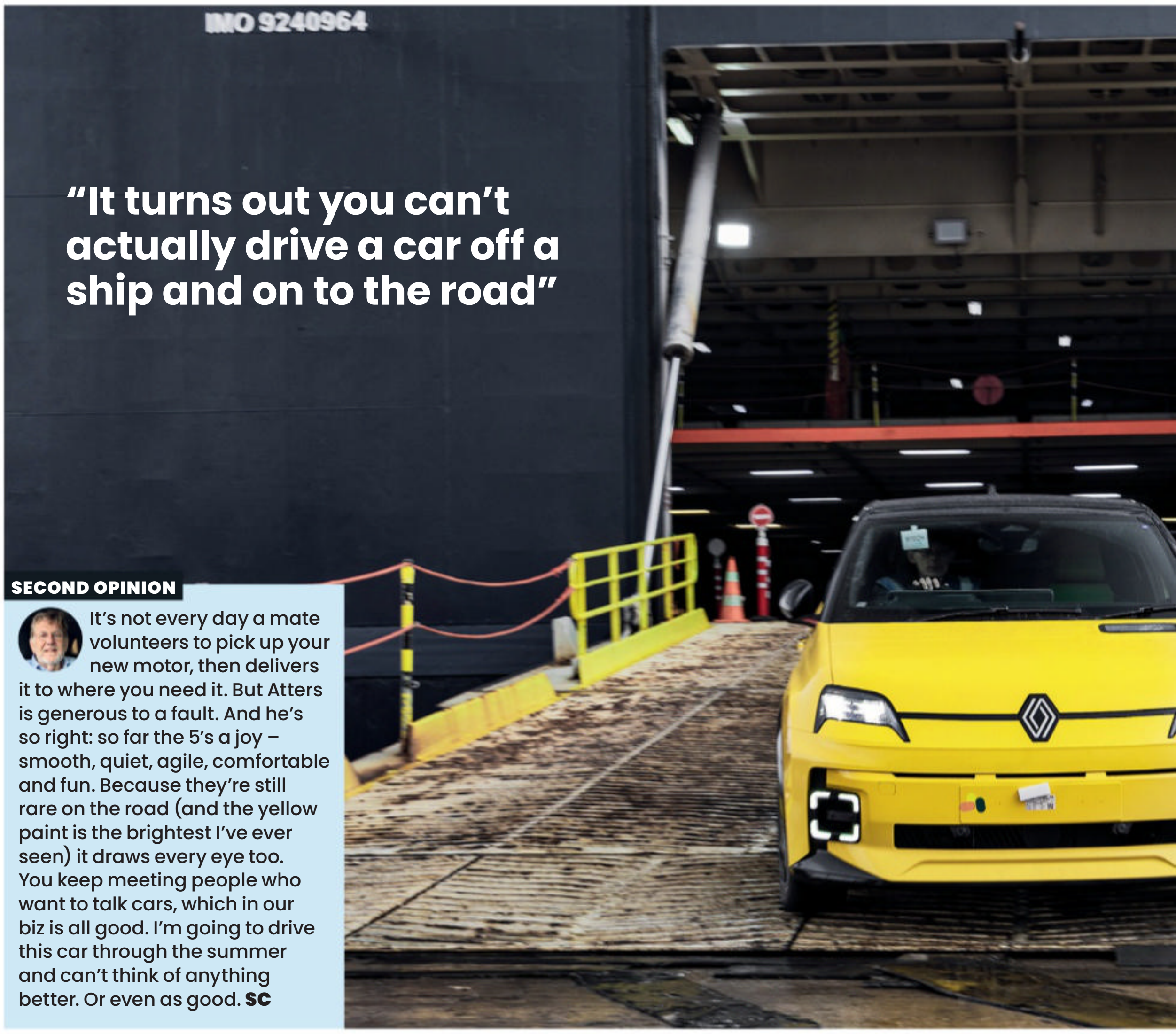
Our 5 was simple to spec: we went for top-level Iconic trim, which has pretty much all the kit you would want, such as climate control, colour-changing interior lights, synthetic leather seats and a heated steering wheel. Selecting the Comfort Range model gave us the 201bhp motor and largest, 52kWh (usable) battery, all for £28,995. We also added Pop Yellow paint for £1200, because it looks fantastic.

While I'd identified our car already, the stevedores who empty car transporters simply jump out of a minibus that's driven onto the deck and get in the first car in the line. On this day, the massive ship had nearly 1600 cars on board, with plenty of 5s and Dacia Springs, and a decent number of Volvo EX90s – although it was hard to recognise the Volvos since they were covered in an abundance of protective wrap.

Every available bit of room is used. Cars are bolted into place and

After a four-point check, cars are unloaded briskly; this ship had 1600 aboard

Stevedore Attwood takes our 5 to the BCA-run site; note the protective wrap



"It turns out you can't actually drive a car off a ship and on to the road"

SECOND OPINION

It's not every day a mate volunteers to pick up your new motor, then delivers it to where you need it. But Atters is generous to a fault. And he's so right: so far the 5's a joy – smooth, quiet, agile, comfortable and fun. Because they're still rare on the road (and the yellow paint is the brightest I've ever seen) it draws every eye too. You keep meeting people who want to talk cars, which in our biz is all good. I'm going to drive this car through the summer and can't think of anything better. Or even as good. **SC**

Red trim detail adds to the 5's retro feel

parked 10cm bumper to bumper, which is just enough space to keep them apart in rough seas. The rows are split by 30cm on one side but there's a slightly bigger gap on the other for a driver to squeeze in.

Each driver does a four-point check on the car before they drive it off the ship so any obvious damage can be addressed and then they drive it to the relevant car firm's facility, jump back in a minibus and get another car.

Our 5 seemed in good order, although it was hard to check out much of the interior due to the various protective wraps over some of the dash and seats. That and the fact that I had to squeeze in without taking off my protective hard hat.

Even nervously driving one off a ship, with heavy-duty protective shoes blunting my throttle modulation, my early impressions of the 5's driving dynamics were positive. Our road testers had raved about its fun and lively handling, and I could feel that as I powered down the ramp and took a sharp turn onto the docks. Although I then had to slow sharply because a big forklift was passing.

It was a short trip to the Renault collection facility, so I was excited to get some more miles in on the way to Cropley's house. Except that it turns out you can't actually drive a car off a ship and onto the road.

Instead, all the vehicles are parked up in Renault's compound and the BCA team conduct a multi-point inspection, before the cars are moved to a preparation facility to be cleaned, and where accessories such as car mats and boot liners are added per the order. If required, the vehicle can be taken into a workshop – some of the 5s have decals that need adding – and then they're ready to be collected and delivered to dealerships.

Still, the wait was worth it when I picked up the 5 a short time later. It really does have a pleasing pep and is genuinely enjoyable. It had me wondering if I could tell Cropley the 5 was stuck in an import pound and keep the keys. Alas, he's just as excited as me to try it out, so I've reluctantly handed it on. Meanwhile, I'm dreaming of a new life as a stevedore…

JAMES ATTWOOD

TEST DATA

RENAULT 5 COMFORT RANGE ICONIC FIVE

Price new £28,995 **Price as tested** £30,195 **Options** Pop Yellow paint with diamond black roof £1200 **Faults** None **Expenses** None **Range** 248 miles (WLTP) **Economy** 3.4mpkWh (WLTP)

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE
steve.cropley@haymarket.com

Given it's a sizeable, 2.4-tonne SUV, it handles back roads with aplomb

BENTLEY BENTAYGA

Sinuous back roads and Sport mode show this SUV's true colours

MILEAGE 17,994
WHY WE'RE RUNNING IT In facelifted form, is this SUV still the pinnacle of British luxury motoring?

This Bentayga V8 S exists because customers demanded even more dynamic performance from their SUV. The S receives active anti-roll control and an enhanced Sports chassis mode, including a 15% increase in damping rates to stiffen the chassis. There's also a different sports exhaust to give "a more sporting soundtrack" and some visual details such as unique 22in wheels and plenty of black detailing.

I'll admit I have mostly enjoyed driving our Bentayga long-termer in Comfort mode. But feeling like I hadn't been staying true to this car's ethos, I found a spare weekend to see its other side. The outing took me to Oxfordshire to visit a friend, but I went a long way round, where there was an abundance of empty windy rural roads, which definitely deserved more than Comfort mode.

A quick twizzle of the drive modes to Sport and you feel the steering become a little more alert, the exhaust pop louder and a subtle dial-up of firmness. And gosh, I've not used paddle shifts in a while and had forgotten how fun they are in a car with this type of ability.

It doesn't shake off its 2.4 tonnes – much as it tries – so between the cost and the size, I would feel more comfortable in a Volkswagen Golf R or 'boggo' Porsche 911, but there's still a lot of poise, capability and glee to be had with a car like this.

I wanted to stretch its legs only so much, given the dimensions of rural roads and the dimensions of the Bentayga, but I found it easy to chuck around the pretty back roads thanks to that standard anti-roll tech and it always felt controlled and well planted when cornering.

I found myself smiling at the simple joy of it – and that's really what we're all after, right? A fun car to drive on a sunny afternoon on quiet country roads. It's an expensive way to do it, but if this is your level of the market and an SUV is your preference, I understand exactly why this car exists.

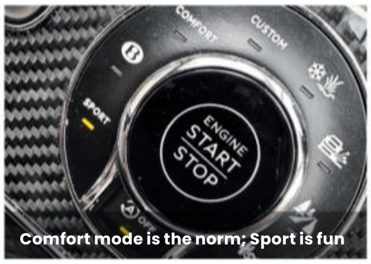
RACHEL BURGESS

LOVE IT

SOUND CHOICE
The Naim speakers are proving thoroughly enjoyable for blasting out tunes – a £7065 sound system that's befitting of a Bentley.

LOATHE IT

BURGE ON THE VERGE
When I arrived at my friend's, there was nowhere to park apart from on a grass verge, and I felt that the death stare from her neighbour was made worse because of my car…



Comfort mode is the norm; Sport is fun

TEST DATA

BENTLEY BENTAYGA V8 S

Price new £197,300 **Price as tested** £258,185 **Faults** None **Expenses** None **Economy** 14.2mpg **Last seen** 18.6.25

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE
rachel.burgess@haymarket.com

SUZUKI SWIFT

Is our little live wire like a fine wine, or something closer to a Swift half?

MILEAGE 10,756
WHY WE'RE RUNNING IT To see if this latest incarnation has maintained that trademark no-frills appeal

My time with the Swift really is something of a love story.

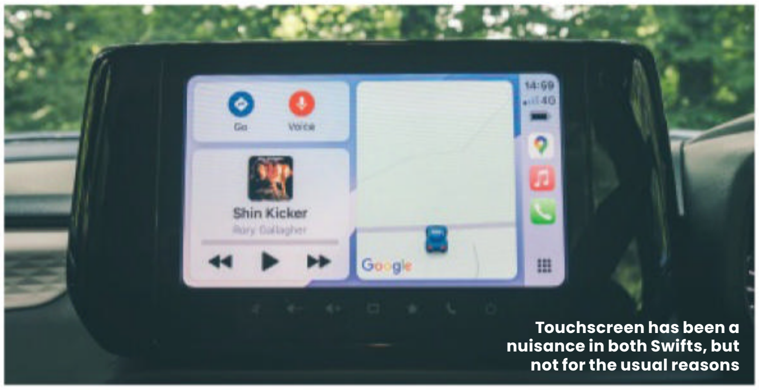
There are so many things to like, from the practical stuff like the fabulous fuel economy (now approaching 58mpg with gentle pedal use from my feet of lead) and a surprisingly large boot capable of holding far more rubbish than you would think, to elements I've mentioned in previous reports such as the impressive turn-in response and one of the greatest manual gearchanges of any car on sale today.

That's not to say it's all sunshine and roses, mind. A dashboard-shaped slug has crept into my rose garden, and a starter-generator-shaped cloud has drifted over it.

Regular readers will know that this is actually our second Swift – not through any fault of its own. We just wanted to try out both trim levels from the refreshingly simple model range. The first one was a base-spec Motion, while our current black-roofed car is the slightly more premium Ultra.

The nice thing about running two examples of very similar cars is that it lets you see whether a problem is simply an outlier, a bit of bad luck thankfully exclusive to a singular vehicle, or something that's an inherent flaw across the range.

I've noted a couple of things that both our cars experienced. The most consistent and irritating one concerns the dashboard itself – something I actually rather like, with it being so low down and intuitive. It's not the design of the dashboard that's the problem, though. It's the build.



Touchscreen has been a nuisance in both Swifts, but not for the usual reasons

The interiors of both our cars seemed well put together when I had a poke around them after delivery, but as the miles wore on some strange noises affected both.

LOVE IT

DIALLED IN

Analogue dials are becoming ever rarer, and the set fitted to the Suzuki are pretty pleasing.

LOATHE IT

YES, IT'S DISTRACTING!

The car asks me to confirm that I won't be distracted by the screen every time I start it by displaying a message that is annoyingly hard to get rid of.

After each car reached around 8000 miles, a rattling sound could be heard from the dashboard. It's worth mentioning that the interior of the Swift isn't exactly library-quiet (colleagues often comment that it sounds like I'm speaking from inside a tumble dryer when I'm on a hands-free phone call), so a squeak has to be fairly loud to be noticed, especially at speed.

The noise would normally be set off by the crashy secondary ride, but I couldn't quite work out where it was coming from. It seemed to be emanating from the left side of the dashboard, but no in-car rattle has ever come from where you thought it would be. I realised I could pause it by gripping the top of the central touchscreen, so I can reasonably deduce that it's the source. Not ideal, and slightly concerning that it's happened to both of our cars.

The other issue is less common but more serious. Several months ago, when the weather was much milder, I left the original Swift out in the cold for two days – not a long time to leave a car to its own devices, and it wasn't really that chilly (around 8deg C). Despite this, it had a real struggle to start, with the generator spinning but failing to spark the three-cylinder into life. This went on for maybe 15 seconds, while I was pumping the throttle just in case, before it roared into life.

It happened only the once, and I viewed it as just something of an oddity, and the car went back to Suzuki without ever doing it again. However, several months later I rushed out to the Swift Ultra, ready to start my schlep over to the Aston Martin F1 factory to photograph boss Lawrence Stroll for last week's Autocar Awards issue, only for it not to start. This time, it took about four attempts over the course of a minute to resuscitate the engine, which sounded uncannily like a diesel locomotive attempting to splutter into life from a very cold start. I'd been out in it the day before, though, and had left it for about six days straight with no issues previously.

Aside from that, the car has been trouble-free, but it's the sort of thing that makes me feel like I can't fully trust it.

JACK HARRISON

TEST DATA

SUZUKI SWIFT 1.2 MILD HYBRID ULTRA

Price new £20,799 **Price as tested** £21,649 **Faults** None **Expenses** None **Economy** 57.2mpg **Last seen** 4.6.25

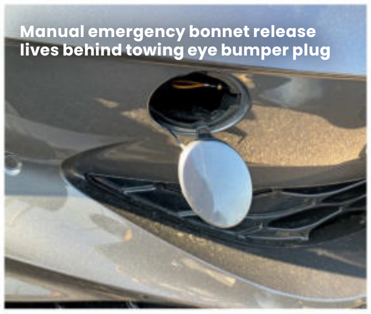
SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE
jack.harrison@haymarket.com

MG CYBERSTER

Week's lay-up reveals hidden perils of airport parking

MILEAGE 3890
WHY WE'RE RUNNING IT Can a two-seat roadster/GT/sports car be both satisfying to own and electric?

Incandescent rage rendered Prior's thumb out of focus, but not the MG


Manual emergency bonnet release lives behind towing eye bumper plug

I almost knew it would be a bad idea to leave the MG Cyberster unplugged in a car park for a week. We've received enough letters about (some) EVs and PHEVs conking out when left for extended periods that I nearly took an old diesel to the airport instead. But don't be so silly, I told myself – it'll be fine. And if it's not, that's the point of trying it.

It wasn't fine. On my return I pressed the key fob and, sure enough, nothing happened. Not a peep of sound, not a flash of lights nor the merest hint that the car knew I was standing next to it, apoplectic, trying to unlock it.

I pressed the button again, and again, then all the other buttons on both car and remote, repeatedly and exhaustively – sometimes simultaneously – even though I knew it wouldn't make a difference. The car had enough electrical power in it to drive to Nottingham, but not enough to open the doors.

This is apparently a thing with some EVs. They have a very large high-voltage drive battery but, like all cars, also a 12V system that runs everything else. If the 12V battery on an ICE car is low, it will at least have a go at spinning the engine into life so it can charge from the alternator. If the 12V battery on an EV is low, it won't dare try to connect the big switch to the high-voltage system.

Some EVs will keep an eye on themselves and periodically connect to the high-voltage system to top up the 12V battery. Others, apparently like the MG, do not.

I needed access to the 12V battery. Some cars have a physical key within the remote so you can at least open a door. The Cyberster doesn't. Its door and boot buttons are electrically operated, so in the event of a flat 12V you can't get into the cabin. And as well as being where you left your house keys, that's where you'll find the bonnet release to access the 12V battery.

Mercifully, MG's techs have a workaround: behind one of the front bumper's towing eye access panels is a wire pull that unlatches the bonnet, so you can get under there, if not to your house keys.

With bonnet up and terminals located, I phoned the car park operator who kindly sent a man in a van with a 12V jump pack, but it wasn't quite good enough to coax the Cyberster into life.

So I called the AA, and after a short wait a very, very nice man called Simon (who remembers the old 'very very nice man' AA ads but was too polite to say he's tired of hearing about them) arrived with an ammeter and a fully juiced jump pack. Diagnosed and with the pack connected, the MG sparked into life, opened its door on command, quickly threw up about three dozen error messages and then got over itself and behaved normally.

Simon has come across this problem before but hadn't seen the secret bonnet release, a tip that, via the AA grapevine, will now be more widely known. And thanks to Heathrow's car park, which quickly sent help and confirmed there would be no charge for overstaying, or for the AA. The car has been fine since, but I know one long-haul pilot who has cancelled a Cyberster order as a result of the tale.

MATT PRIOR

LOVE IT

RAPID ROOF

The roof operates really quickly at up to 30mph. I'm surprising myself by how often I'll swap between roof up or down.

LOATHE IT

NOT A FAN

The fan speed and temperature buttons feel the 'wrong' way round: the hotter button is to the left of the colder one; fan-up is left of fan-down. I'll get over it.

TEST DATA

MG CYBERSTER GT

Price new £59,995 **Price as tested** £60,540
Faults Flat 12V battery **Expenses** None
Range 231 miles **Economy** 3.0mpkWh
Last seen 18.6.25

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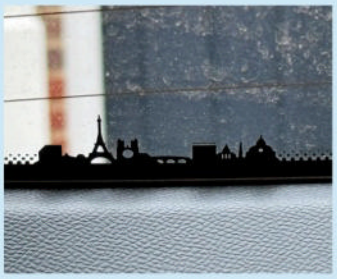
CCTV in operation

SNAPSHOTS



CITROEN E-C3

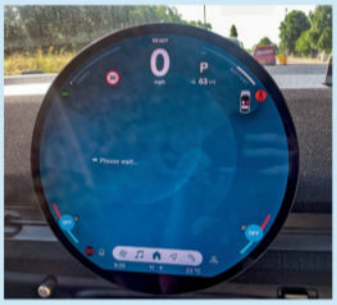
Mileage 1452 **Last seen** 18.6.25

All ë-C3s get a stencilled graphic of the Paris skyline, Eiffel Tower et al, along the bottom edge of the rear windscreen. However, because our Max model comes with tinted rear windows, the picturesque cityscape is impossible to see from the exterior of the car. Maybe I'm just a show-off, but it's a shame you can only see it through the rear-view mirror. **JW**

DACIA DUSTER

Mileage 1114 **Last seen** 11.6.25

The Duster's cabin contains various mountings that items can be attached to. I now have a phone holder for the one behind the steering wheel, but I'm not getting on with it: it rattles a lot and its position is distracting. Instead, the phone is back in the centre console. However, I can see the clip being useful for entry cars with no touchscreen – especially for maps. **WR**



MINI ACEMAN

Mileage 1812 **Last seen** 25.6.25

The latest annoyance with the Mini's infotainment comes courtesy of slow loading times. After selecting my profile, there's a few seconds of 'Please wait…' – and it needs selecting every time I get in the car. On paper this doesn't sound so bad, but next time you're in a rush just stop in your car for 10 seconds and think how irritating that is. **MSc**

USED CARS

HOW TO BUY A FERRARI 458 ITALIA

A LANDMARK FERRARI BUILT TO MATCH YOUR MOOD

Track hero or easy cruiser, the 458 is the definitive supercar of its era

With a Pininfarina-designed body, a naturally aspirated V8 mounted directly behind your back and a truly exhilarating driving experience, the Ferrari 458 Italia remains the definitive supercar of the early 2010s.

So good is the F430's successor that residual values remain strong, which is why the 458 is best snapped up now before modern classic status takes hold and renders it a near-unaffordable collector's item. Given the fact that list prices for newer 296 GTBs and Purosangues are falling by the week, the 458 should make for a solid investment too.

Sure, those cars are more powerful and much faster on paper, but the 458 will certainly nip at their heels – and because it predates the hybrid era, it delivers a sensory experience that its modern equivalents can only dream of.

A 0-62mph time of 3.3sec and a top speed of 210mph mean it's still a ridiculously quick car and its Getrag-engineered dual-clutch automatic gearbox is the ideal wingman to the 458's intoxicating 4.5-litre V8, which makes 542bhp and 398lb ft of torque. You can access 80% of the Ferrari's power as early as 3250rpm, but you won't be swapping cogs as low down as that because this heady V8 lump will rev all the way to 9000rpm. Watch for skipping gears on the test drive, though, because the dual-clutch auto can suffer from electric gremlins (see 'Buyer beware', right).

While the fabulous V8 and slick gearbox endow the 458 with plenty of drama, its chassis balance

You'll need at least £95k to make this driver-focused view your own

What we said then

18 AUGUST 2010

"When it comes to building road cars, Ferrari is definitely on a bit of a roll at the moment. But even considering the wonderfully desirable 599 GTO, arguably it is the 458 Italia that is Ferrari's greatest achievement. That isn't simply because the 458 weaves scintillating ground-covering pace with impressive practicality but also because, for all of its technology, it remains an interactive and deeply satisfying car to drive – be that at three-tenths on a back road or fully committed at your favourite track."

and handling make it a true driver's car – and one that's far sweeter than cheaper Ferraris of yore. Whether or not the dampers are in their 'bumpy road' mode (handy for Britain's unkempt roads), the 458's body is controlled and tight, and despite the steering being light and quick, it's communicative and precise.

The 458 handles with a supreme level of agility matched by only the Noble M600 – and yet the Ferrari is the far better-riding car. And the trick electric differential and suite of driving modes – controlled via the tactile manettino on the steering wheel – mean the 458 can be either a laid-back daily driver or exciting track car, to suit your mood. The Brembo-sourced carbon-ceramic brakes provide plenty of stopping power too. Just make sure you've got £10,000 stashed away when you need to replace them.

You can pay less than £100,000 for a high-mileage car, but for around £125,000 you'll have access to a broader choice of colours, interior trims and cars with a main dealer service history. If your future 458 will spend most of its time on track, carbon buckets and Alcantara trim are must-haves – and try to avoid carbon exterior elements because you don't want gravel and the like forcing unwanted (and expensive) repairs. Opt for leather and comfort seats if you're after a grand touring ambience. Sunseekers are likely to be drawn to the open-air thrills of the 458 Spider, which commands a slight premium over the coupé.

Whatever your choice, the 458 is a landmark supercar that has tumbled to such accessible levels (in a relative sense, of course) that it's impossible to overlook. Why not snap up this hedonistic Ferrari, set the sat-nav for the North Coast 500 and bask in its brilliance all the way to John O'Groats.

SAM PHILLIPS

Sublime chassis balance and an atmo V8 that revs to 9000rpm are addictive

"While the V8 and 'box endow it with plenty of drama, its handling makes it a true driver's car"

How to get one in your garage

AN OWNER'S VIEW

BEN McCAULDER

"I've owned my Ferrari 458 for three years now. With its normally aspirated V8 and Pininfarina design, it was the perfect choice for my first supercar. I was encouraged by their known reliability and easier maintenance than earlier cars. Servicing is reasonable, but I've had to pay for a few repair bills – a wheel bearing and a wiring issue. Not cheap, but not bad. What has surprised me most is its usability. It will rev to 9000rpm and dance like a true supercar but then be perfectly civil when you drive it normally."

BUYER BEWARE...

■ GEARBOX
Run the Getrag dual-clutch auto up through the gears to make sure the shifts are responsive. Damage to the speed sensor wiring can affect early examples, causing the 'box to miss gears.

■ BODY
Look out for any bubbling on the wheel arches: corrosion isn't uncommon on early cars and can be a costly repair, especially if the car is finished in a bright colour.

Most 458s will have been specced with plenty of exterior carbonfibre, so take a good look at the side skirts, front splitter, rear diffuser and any other elements for damage.

■ FIRE RISK
The adhesive in the rear wheel arches can get too hot and spontaneously combust. Ferrari quickly recalled all 458 models in 2010 to have new liners fitted at local dealers. Check any required remedial work has been done.

■ CONVERTIBLE ROOF
Electric roof on the Spider can jam when opening so ensure it works properly. Water can seep into the cabin: look out for damage or staining on the roof lining.

■ BRAKES
Carbon-ceramics are expensive to replace. A new set of discs and pads, and the labour to fit them, can cost around £10,000.

■ TYRES
Make sure the tyres, particularly the rears, aren't excessively worn. A set of four will set you back around £1600.

■ WHEELS
Inspect the alloys for kerbing, especially diamond-cut items that cost a fortune to refurbish. You can get new sets second-hand but expect to pay anywhere between £1500 and £3500.

ALSO WORTH KNOWING

The 458's soundtrack is pure Formula 1, but if you want even more noise, there are plenty of aftermarket alternatives. Capristo, Novitec and IPE Valvetronic are mentioned heavily in forums. Just watch for de-cat systems, which may void your warranty and may also be too loud for track days.

HOW MUCH TO SPEND

£95,000-£109,999
High-mileage cars but still with Ferrari/specialist service history. Mainly black, white and grey.

£110,000-£119,999
Mileage is more reasonable here. Early examples with a broad mix of colours and trims.

£120,000-£129,999
Pristine models with around 20k miles on the clock. Spiders become available here.

£130,000-£139,999
Stunning cars with a broader choice of colours and trims. Mileage can vary so shop around.

£140,000 AND ABOVE
Spiders dominate at this kind of money. Newer cars with delivery miles and one previous owner.

ONE WE FOUND

FERRARI 458 ITALIA F1 DCT, 2012, 29,000 MILES, £114,174
With a full service history, Grigio Titanio paint and Ferrari shields on the wings, this 458 Italia looks as jaw-dropping as it did when it first rolled out of Maranello. It has just been serviced, and with four new tyres fitted it's ready for a track day or a European road trip – or both.

My car & I

One of my other 13 cars is another MP4

Unfortunately, on seeing a McLaren MP4-12C the first thing you want to ask its owner is how its software, door locks, airbags and headlights are behaving. "Faults with these were blown out of proportion by some journalists," counters Peter Hogan. "For example, it turned out that the door latches were easily fixed. Then some people whinged about the gearboxes failing but probably only one in 300 was a problem. My car has experienced none of the infotainment glitches reported by the press. The radio works. The sat-nav is a bit old-school but I love it."

Peter might sound just a tad defensive except that his faith in the model is such that he has not one but two MP4s. The one I'm looking at is a 2012-reg with just 2000 miles on the clock and he bought it on 1 April (no jokes, please). His other is a 2011-reg with 35,000 miles, which he bought five years ago.

"What I really love about the MP4 is the design," he says. "I think that, for the rear, the designer Frank Stephenson was inspired by the Ferrari Testarossa." Peter should know: he owns one among many other cars, about which more later.

Back to his MP4 and his only real gripe is the cost of the parts: "They're ludicrously expensive but

Our cars

What to do at the end of the PCP: buy it or walk away?

BY MARK TISSHAW

The main household reasons for choosing our Renault Clio were the combination of a killer PCP deal and to return to the security of new car reliability, backed by a warranty, after an iffy experience previously.

It doesn't get driven too much (fewer than 5000 miles in 18 months now), yet when we're paying under £30 a month for the privilege and less than half that again on top for a service plan, we don't feel too wasteful.

When that service plan was used for the first time, there was further validation of the reasons for going back to a new car. Our main dealer, Martin's in Reading, was able to fit us in at relatively short notice at the exact time and date we requested. The work was done quickly yet even so we had regular contact. Unsurprisingly, given its low use, the Clio was given a clean bill of health.

The decision about whether to buy it outright is looming – the PCP was for only two years – but failing to do is likely to be a big opportunity missed. There's no 'used' car we can be more sure about the condition of.

Clio has been a reliable, low-cost new car backed by a reassuring warranty

Peter bought this 2000-mile, 2012 MP4-12C four months ago for £75,000

A McLaren fan, Peter's dog also loves a tuned Porsche. Favourite? "Ruf"

> "My older MP4 needed new suspension springs. Price: £18,000. But it cost me £2500"

hunt around and you can save a lot of money. For example, my older MP4 needed a set of new suspension springs. Price: £18,000. I wasn't going to pay that, so I took the car to specialists Centre Gravity in Coventry. They sent the springs to Sheffield, where new ones were made for £75 each and sent back to Coventry. Total bill: £2500."

Similarly, Peter says refurbished gearboxes can now be bought for £6000 compared with the £30,000 often charged elsewhere.

Peter bought his second McLaren through Collecting Cars, the online auction house. It hadn't achieved reserve. "I bought the first one at auction too," he says. "The official guide that tracks car auction results said no one had bought a 12C at auction for three years when I bought it. That's how unpopular they were and now here was another MP4 languishing unsold! It didn't put me off. I negotiated with the seller and bought it for £75,000. One with the same mileage would have cost £100,000 at a dealer."

I'm keen to know what other cars Peter owns. "I have 12 in addition to the two McLarens," he says. "The Porsches I own are a 928 GTS, a 2005 911 Carrera, a 2011 911 Carrera S Cabriolet and a 2016 911 Turbo S. The Bentleys are a GT, an Arnage and a Mulsanne that I just had to buy because effectively it had 80% off. Someone had paid £300,000 for it in 2014 and I got it for £58,000 in a private sale. It's also the only car my girlfriend will travel in.

"There's my 1991 Testarossa, of course, and I also have a Ferrari 308 GTS. Entering the home straight, there's a modern Morgan 3 Wheeler, a Jaguar E-Type S2 4.2 (not the prettiest version to own thanks to the need, at the time, to satisfy US safety laws) and a 2005 Aston Martin Vanquish S. Believe me, it's quite a thing keeping up with 14 cars."

JOHN EVANS

Head to head

JACK HARRISON

1987 MERCEDES-BENZ 300 GD

VS

FELIX PAGE

2007 LAND ROVER DEFENDER 110 TD5

Brief: Find a capable off-roader that looks as good in the mud as it does in Mayfair

FP Ten double-cab Defenders were used as the baddies' cars in the James Bond film Spectre. Just seven survived, and they're worth a quarter-mil now. This tricked-out TD5 looks the same and has all the right off-road kit for just £35k. Aspirational and unstoppable. Shame they removed that massive mound in Hyde Park, really.

JH It's capable, sure, but makes a gold-chrome toilet look subtle. This thoroughly restored late-1980s Mercedes 300 GD is truly timeless, subtly cool in the way a modern G-Class could only dream of and is £5k less than your Defender.

FP Not a G63 badge in sight – you'll be laughed out of Grosvenor Square. I'd fancy my sprightlier Landie in a Dakar duel too.

JH Yours might get there more quickly but I'd have more faith in my Merc. The OM617 five-pot is known for being a million-mile engine. Not sure the TD5 has quite the same reputation…

FP Sorry, have you read the Defender's advert? It's got a snorkel. And Super Gaz shocks. Who needs such frivolities as oil pressure or an intact head gasket?

JH Both decadent luxuries, agreed. In which case, I've picked the off-road equivalent of a Rolls-Royce Phantom…

CAUGHT IN THE CLASSIFIEDS

FORD FIESTA 1.0T ECOBOOST TITANIUM

2018, 35,000 miles, £8890

This immaculate Fiesta should serve well as a fun and frugal runabout. Titanium trim means it has Apple CarPlay, cruise control and a B&O audio system. It also has low mileage, a long MOT and the promise of 60mpg.

VOLKSWAGEN POLO 1.0 EVO SE

2019, 46,500 miles, £9950

Spacious, well equipped and refined, VW's supermini has plenty of 'big car' feel and this one has been well maintained. Like the Fiesta (above), it has all the right kit, including CarPlay and DAB radio. It has just two previous owners and comes with a decent service history.

FIAT 500C 1.0 MHEV

2024, 11,500 miles, £13,190

Want your daily driver to come with retro charm and open-air thrills? Then this drop-top 500 should be ideal. It looks as fresh as the day it rolled off the line and has all the features you would want from a modern supermini. Including 60mpg.

TOYOTA AYGO 1.0 VVT-i

2008, 27,500 miles, £2495

This tidy, low-mileage Aygo proves that you don't need to spend piles of money on an economical runabout. It has just been serviced, has an MOT until next April, sits in a low insurance group and costs only £20 to tax.

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The Autocar Lost in the archive

Many children of the '60s and '70s have memories (fond or otherwise) of van holidays

Brits go mad for caravans and camper vans

Caravans and camper vans feature only rarely in Autocar these days – but half a century ago they were a regular and prominent topic, reflecting the popularity of such vehicles among the British public. Before the advent of cheap flights abroad, hauling a very small, very basic hotel room into a field somewhere was how the average family could 'get away from it all'.

Caravans were nothing new: the UK's Caravan Club is 118 years old. But the austerity of post-war Britain led to a 'golden age' for them in the 1960s and 1970s, as car ownership had become a realistic prospect for the middle and working classes and people were starting to have more money to spare on pleasure.

In the 1950s, around 3000 caravans were being made in the UK annually; by 1972, that figure had soared to a peak of 67,000.

Already by 1959, the caravan industry had outgrown its corner of the London motor show and held its own Earl's Court expo, with some 46 makers and 86 suppliers, service providers and traders in attendance.

"There is no doubt that, at the moment, the British caravan industry leads the world," we reported proudly. From Astral through Eccles and Lynton to Sprite, we saw many "caravans of excellent design and construction".

By then the British Caravan Road Rally was already well established, featuring tests of hill climbing, fast towing, braking and distance judgement – not to forget a very inelegant concours d'elegance.

Later, track tests and even racing were added. We reported from Silverstone in 1973: "There was a fantastic battle between the Ford Mustang and Cavalier of Brian Charig and Colin Grewer's potent-sounding Volvo 131 and Bailey Mikado. Inevitably Charig was able to draw away on the straights, but Grewer repeatedly caught up by taking the corners of the Club circuit under full power and with little or no preliminary braking. The average speed was nearly 60mph."

Caravan racing was a novelty at Silverstone...

...and one caravan maker even had its own Formula 1 car

Mad! But we're getting ahead of ourselves. Back to 1965, and the van conversion industry was booming too. Camper vans weren't bound by the 40mph limit of caravans and were simpler to drive but mostly lacked standing height and had far fewer amenities. "The old 'penny wise, pound foolish' theory applies very much. It can be a mistake to buy too simple a model," we advised.

Popular donor vans included the Volkswagen Type 2, Ford's Transit, Rootes' Commer FC, BMC's Morris J2 and J4 and Vauxhall's Bedford CA.

Camper vans' heyday ended in 1973, when they and caravans were hit with the new value added tax, raising prices by around 10%.

Other buying guides from Autocar included those for caravan accessories: shock dampers, jacks, brackets, awnings, battery-powered televisions, porta-showers, 'chemical sanitation' (not bogs?) and even a periscope.

Not everyone was in on the craze, of course. "For as long as I can remember, I have been against caravans," wrote our man David Phipps in 1971. "They clutter up the roads, and three weeks in one must surely constitute grounds for divorce."

But when he acquiesced to his two young children's pleas to attend that year's German Grand Prix, a caravan was the only viable option.

He had been offered one by Rolf Stommelen, the driver for German caravan maker Eifelland's new F1 team. Not a joke! Founder Günther Hennerici had always been a racing enthusiast, and what better way to promote his business? Amazing, considering that even Cadillac is hardly welcome in F1 these days.

Phipps ended up taking his family all the way to Radstadt in Austria, yet "my Ford Cortina Estate needed no attention whatsoever, I am still happily married and I am actually contemplating doing this again".

Not all caravanners were so lucky. When racer Brian Redman used one for his 1967 European tour, he was awoken one evening by his wife getting the thing sideways.

"There was a tremendous jerk as the body came off the chassis," he recalled. "I looked out and there was absolute devastation – luggage all over the road and a VW up a tree! It had crashed avoiding our mayhem. We gathered everything up as best we could and went to the nearest hotel for the night. The only people staying there were the owners of the VW... The local scrap metal dealer gave me £5 for the caravan chassis and charged me £15 for a roof rack to take what we salvaged of our gear!"

KRIS CULMER

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D24 DUC	£675
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H21 DUF	£675
F26 DUF	£675
D21 DUG	£675
61 DUG	£6300
925 DUG	£2500
D21 DUN	£1300
G21 DUN	£1100
J21 DUN	£1200
K21 DUN	£975
C24 DUN	£975
E25 DUN	£875
A26 DUN	£675
D26 DUN	£1100
DV 6243	£1300
4560 DW	£2600
DWC 711	£1300
D15 DWN	£675
G24 DWN	£675
E26 DWN	£675
C22 DXN	£675
D23 DXN	£675
A24 DXN	£875
E25 DXN	£675
DYZ 911	£1700
B15 EAD	£675
H26 EAD	£675
B22 EAL	£675
E5 EAM	£775
K9 EAN	£1700
A20 EAN	£875
A25 EAS	£675
D24 EBB	£675
D25 EBS	£1100
887 ECG	£875
H22 ECK	£675
A26 ECK	£675
C25 ECO	£675
P3 EDA	£675
R99 EDD	£675
G4 EDE	£675
H5 EDG	£875
H22 EDG	£675
M8 EDW	£1600
C21 EDW	£675
D23 EDW	£675
E23 EDW	£675
F21 EDY	£875
N21 EDY	£675
H23 EED	£675
K24 EEL	£675
A23 EFC	£675
EG 8945	£1600
P21 EGG	£675
507 EGJ	£1500
2255 EH	£1900
8713 EH	£1500
EHC 329	£1100
H21 EJB	£675
F23 EJB	£675
D22 EJM	£675
A26 EJM	£675
P2 EJR	£675
D21 EJW	£675
S8 ELA	£1700
N25 ELA	£775
B26 ELA	£675
H26 ELA	£875
T1 ELD	£675
E23 ELE	£675
B25 ELE	£675
N31 ELE	£675
G25 ELF	£675
G25 ELL	£875
A26 ELL	£675
H21 ELM	£675
M22 ELM	£675
H25 ELN	£1100
H21 ELS	£975
B23 ELS	£875
R6 ELT	£675
F21 ELY	£675
L21 ELY	£675
K24 ELY	£675
D21 EMA	£1300
A24 EMA	£1200
H21 EMB	£675
D23 EMB	£675
F8 EMH	£675
G21 EMM	£875
D22 EMM	£675
J77 EMM	£875
H26 EMS	£775
D24 EMY	£675
H26 EMY	£675
G21 ENA	£675
A25 END	£675
D24 ENE	£675
G25 ENE	£675
B26 ENJ	£675
H21 ENN	£1200
N21 ENN	£675
B25 ENN	£1400
D25 ENN	£1200
G21 ENS	£675
B26 ENS	£675
D21 ENT	£875
G25 ENT	£775
D21 ENY	£675
D21 EON	£675
W1 EPC	£775
939 EPF	£775
M2 EPS	£975
R9 EPS	£875
G26 ERA	£675
D21 ERB	£675
H21 ERB	£1600
86 ERB	£3300
R1 ERD	£1500
H22 ERD	£675
B26 ERT	£1200
V21 ERY	£2100
B23 ERY	£875
W1 ESH	£1100
G21 ESH	£675
A26 ESH	£875
F21 EST	£675
N6 ESW	£675
L9 ETH	£675
H25 ETT	£675
P7 EVE	£1600
A21 EVE	£1500
C21 EVE	£1400
J23 EVE	£875
G21 EVS	£675
B24 EVS	£675
K28 EVS	£675
A21 EWS	£675
A23 FAB	£675
F25 FAB	£675
P21 FAR	£675
A23 FAR	£675
D23 FAR	£675
C21 FAY	£875
F21 FAY	£1300
E34 FAY	£675
36 FAY	£5100
A87 FAY	£675
388 FBB	£775
FCE 86	£1700
L6 FEB	£675
N21 FEN	£675
C24 FEN	£675
H23 FER	£675
266 FFR	£675
E21 FFY	£675
7060 FG	£775
9571 FH	£1300
116 FHA	£675
FHE 829	£875
FIL 942	£1300
FIL 5155	£675
N1 FJB	£675
C24 FLY	£675
5887 FM	£1600
270 FME	£1100
FMZ 911	£1700
W9 FOG	£675
290 FOR	£1200
D21 FOS	£675
R22 FOX	£1600
A24 FOX	£1700
FR 301	£4900
FR 9034	£1900
C21 FRD	£1300
G21 FRD	£675
C24 FRD	£675
D24 FRD	£675
G21 FRE	£675
C24 FRE	£675
FRW 975	£1300
C21 FRY	£675
D21 FRY	£675
FSR 47	£2500
FT 54	£8300
A24 FUL	£675
T19 FUN	£675
A26 FUN	£675
D26 FUN	£775
636 FYN	£1900
A23 GAB	£675
C24 GAB	£675
A21 GAH	£675
F14 GAL	£675
R44 GAL	£675
A26 GAM	£775
A21 GAN	£675
C26 GAN	£775
D26 GAN	£675
D11 GAP	£775
S14 GAP	£675
H14 GAR	£675
D21 GAR	£675
G21 GAR	£675
E23 GAR	£675
J24 GAR	£675
C21 GAV	£675
A22 GAV	£675
D22 GAV	£675
G23 GAV	£875
GAZ 344	£1300
GAZ 9141	£675
GBO 877	£675
J1 GBS	£2100
A21 GBS	£675
GC 3809	£2400
GEC 7	£4700
A22 GED	£675
J23 GEE	£875
K23 GEE	£675
C25 GEE	£1200
D25 GEE	£1300
E26 GEE	£975
G26 GEE	£1200
C8 GEF	£1100
P8 GEL	£1500
B24 GEL	£675
C26 GEM	£1300
J321 GEM	£775
B6 GEN	£675
H21 GEN	£675
G24 GEN	£675
D21 GEO	£675
J21 GEO	£675
G25 GEO	£675
D21 GER	£675
G21 GER	£1200
J21 GER	£975
C24 GER	£1300
H26 GER	£1200
A23 GGG	£675
H25 GGS	£675
D26 GGY	£675
GIB 471	£2100
GIL 430	£1300
GIL 3349	£675
GIL 6393	£775
L5 GJA	£775
A23 GJB	£675
G23 GJB	£675
D21 GJH	£675
A23 GJH	£675
GJI 570	£875
F21 GJM	£675
A24 GJM	£675
Y8 GJR	£675
A26 GJR	£675
E21 GJW	£675
A23 GJW	£675
GK 776	£5300
901 GKF	£675
A23 GMB	£675
E6 GOR	£1500
E21 GOR	£675
A24 GOR	£675
A24 GOW	£675
GP 3090	£3100
A2 GPS	£675
J21 GRA	£875
A24 GRA	£1100
D22 GRM	£675
B25 GRN	£675
Y9 GRY	£775
GSU 180	£675
J8 GSW	£1100
GTP 608	£1200
E21 GTR	£875
A24 GTR	£675
975 GUB	£975
L15 GUN	£875
N1 GUS	£3100
T23 GUS	£875
J11 GUY	£1200
B20 GUY	£1100
K24 GUY	£775
X40 GUY	£975
N999 GUY	£675
A21 GYM	£675
A26 HAB	£675
C26 HAD	£875
A21 HAG	£675
C21 HAL	£675
D21 HAL	£675
E26 HAL	£675
A23 HAM	£875
E23 HAM	£675
H23 HAM	£775
G21 HAN	£1300
G22 HAR	£875
E24 HAR	£675
B25 HAR	£1200
J80 HAR	£775
C21 HAS	£675
S12 HAT	£875
R16 HAT	£675
G21 HAT	£675
D26 HAT	£675
D21 HAY	£875
K21 HAY	£675
C26 HAY	£875
HAZ 430	£1100
250 HD	£5500
G25 HED	£675
A26 HED	£675
R27 HED	£675
B7 HEL	£1500
P23 HEL	£675
D23 HEM	£675
C26 HEM	£675
G11 HEN	£675
D25 HEN	£775
A26 HEP	£675
E25 HER	£675
H4 HES	£1300
X6 HES	£975
C21 HES	£675
J26 HES	£675
A23 HEV	£675
A23 HEW	£675
C24 HEW	£1100
HIL 380	£775
HIL 7454	£675
8679 HJ	£875
A21 HJB	£675
G21 HLL	£675
D25 HLL	£675
C26 HLL	£675
367 HLW	£875
P9 HMB	£675
A26 HMC	£675
C21 HMS	£675
A25 HNT	£675
D26 HNT	£675
D21 HOB	£675
A24 HOB	£675
C9 HOC	£1300
A25 HOD	£675
H25 HOD	£675
S9 HOE	£1900
H21 HOG	£675
W20 HOL	£1200
A26 HOL	£1200
B26 HOL	£1300
E26 HOL	£1200
A21 HOP	£875
D21 HOP	£675
B26 HOP	£775
A21 HOW	£875
G21 HOW	£775
C25 HOW	£875
D25 HOW	£875
H25 HOW	£875
E26 HOW	£675
29 HS	£14500
31 HT	£11000
HTK 954	£875
C21 HUB	£675
B21 HUD	£675
E21 HUD	£675
D24 HUD	£675
A26 HUD	£675
A24 HUG	£675
C24 HUG	£675
B26 HUG	£675
E26 HUG	£775
S18 HUL	£675
A21 HUL	£875
A21 HUM	£675
C21 HUM	£675
A25 HUN	£875
H5 HUT	£975
C23 HUT	£675
G23 HUT	£675
F26 HUT	£675
HVG 853	£875
IJI 843	£875
H2 JAB	£1500
H21 JAB	£675
D25 JAB	£675
A26 JAB	£875
C26 JAB	£675
H21 JAC	£1500
D23 JAC	£1300
M311 JAC	£975
R321 JAC	£1200
L7 JAD	£1400
T13 JAD	£675
D21 JAF	£675
G21 JAF	£675
C22 JAF	£675
E15 JAG	£1700
A24 JAG	£1200
X24 JAG	£2300
W27 JAG	£975
N99 JAG	£1100
W100 JAG	£875
H21 JAH	£675
N12 JAK	£1200
G19 JAK	£1400
D21 JAK	£1300
H21 JAK	£1300
A22 JAK	£1300
P23 JAK	£1300
M111 JAK	£1200
N111 JAK	£875
J123 JAK	£875
N4 JAL	£875
X9 JAL	£975
R21 JAL	£675
A25 JAL	£675
D26 JAL	£675
D15 JAM	£875
A26 JAM	£675
Y8 JAN	£2500
N9 JAN	£2900
D21 JAN	£1800
G21 JAN	£1700
K30 JAN	£1500
B44 JAN	£1700
T66 JAN	£1700
S77 JAN	£1800
B92 JAN	£1300
Y222 JAN	£975
P400 JAN	£875
B987 JAN	£675
A21 JAP	£875
C23 JAP	£675
R70 JAP	£675
K11 JAR	£675
P16 JAR	£675
A21 JAR	£975
C21 JAS	£1400
D21 JAS	£1400
A24 JAS	£1300
E80 JAS	£1100
C21 JAW	£675
D21 JAW	£875
D21 JAX	£675
H21 JAX	£675
A23 JAX	£675
C22 JAY	£1300
D23 JAY	£1400
G24 JAY	£1200
JAZ 390	£675
JB 1931	£3500
JB 3995	£3300
X11 JBC	£675
W2 JBM	£675
N8 JBR	£675
D21 JBS	£675
JC 1270	£5500
H5 JCA	£675
D21 JCB	£675
A23 JCB	£675
W1 JCC	£1400
A15 JCC	£675
N5 JCD	£875
A23 JCD	£675
C21 JCH	£675
A18 JCK	£1200
B25 JCK	£875
H26 JCK	£775
C21 JCR	£675
D21 JCS	£675
B26 JCW	£675
D5 JDA	£675
B23 JDB	£675
R4 JDD	£675
S15 JDE	£675
A22 JDE	£675
E21 JDH	£675
G21 JDH	£675
JDJ 256	£875
G21 JDM	£675
H21 JDP	£675
A24 JDP	£675
D25 JDS	£675
P9 JDT	£1300
H21 JDW	£675
P8 JED	£1100
R5 JEE	£975
A21 JEE	£675
J15 JEF	£1200
F21 JEF	£1300
R21 JEF	£675
A22 JEF	£1200
70 JEF	£4500
H21 JEH	£675
C21 JEL	£675
C22 JEM	£875
E22 JEM	£675
D26 JEM	£875
R10 JEN	£1900
E21 JEN	£1800
S321 JEN	£1100
A11 JEP	£675
D21 JEP	£675
A16 JER	£675
T16 JER	£675
A22 JES	£1200
C22 JES	£975
D22 JES	£875
JF 1581	£2900
JG 5102	£2600
E8 JGH	£675
JGL 876	£1600
A24 JGR	£675
8735 JH	£2600
JH 9181	£3100
F9 JHD	£675
H21 JHN	£675
P5 JHW	£675
J8 JHW	£775
699 JI	£4700
JIB 181	£975
JIL 4221	£675
G23 JJB	£675
E7 JJD	£875
A26 JJH	£675
A23 JJR	£675
H4 JJS	£1500
A24 JJS	£675
N77 JJW	£675
E25 JKE	£675
G21 JLB	£675
C24 JLB	£675
C21 JLH	£675
C21 JLM	£675
10 JLT	£6100
JM 1808	£2700
JM 2105	£2500
C23 JMC	£1200
L29 JMC	£975
64 JMD	£4500
L11 JME	£1300
L5 JMG	£875
G14 JMH	£775
X8 JMM	£1300
R11 JMM	£975
L2 JMW	£1200
A24 JMW	£775
C7 JOD	£1600
L7 JOE	£3300
B17 JOE	£1600
D24 JOE	£1500
E24 JOE	£1400
J17 JON	£2300
E21 JON	£1500
H21 JON	£1400
A23 JON	£1400
G23 JON	£1200
D24 JON	£1300
W31 JON	£875
K60 JON	£975
K100 JON	£775
Y1 JOY	£3300
J24 JOY	£975
JPB 5V	£1600
A23 JPM	£775
E21 JRB	£875
S9 JRC	£1500
H9 JRH	£1600
709 JRR	£1400
J10 JSD	£775
D8 JSM	£1400
P7 JUD	£1300
590 JWC	£1400
Y9 KAM	£1700
A26 KAM	£875
N6 KAR	£1200
J22 KAT	£975
C21 KAY	£1200
H21 KAY	£1100
A24 KAY	£1300
J29 KAY	£775
KAZ 663	£1200
KAZ 9777	£675
KDN 563	£875
KEC 125	£975
C21 KEL	£1200
L10 KEN	£875
T21 KEN	£1200
A22 KEN	£1300
D22 KEN	£1100
G21 KER	£975
Y12 KEV	£1100
G21 KEV	£1400
E22 KEV	£1200
A24 KEV	£1300
N99 KEV	£975
B3 KEW	£875
H21 KEY	£1700
A2 KGB	£1300
W8 KJH	£1500
V3 KJP	£1100
L8 KJS	£875
F4 KJW	£1200
7495 KK	£1900
444 KL	£6100
K21 KLY	£775
5663 KM	£1900
L8 KMR	£875
5577 KO	£1500
1306 KR	£1400
R6 KTY	£1200
A15 LAD	£875
258 LAF	£1700
T6 LAH	£1500
E22 LAN	£1200
H25 LAN	£1100
Y3 LAU	£1500
A25 LAU	£1200
E21 LAW	£1300
G21 LAW	£1400
D24 LAW	£1300
S4 LCB	£1300
A25 LDO	£875
D23 LEA	£975
C25 LEA	£1200
A24 LEC	£1700
D21 LEE	£1900
E21 LEE	£1500
G21 LEE	£1700
A24 LEE	£1600
LEG 155	£2300
Y1 LEN	£1900
N5 LEN	£1700
L21 LEN	£1100
A23 LEN	£875
G23 LEN	£1400
E24 LEN	£1600
V31 LEN	£975
R2 LES	£1700
P5 LES	£1600
N12 LES	£1300
E21 LES	£1300
H21 LES	£1200
A22 LES	£1100
G24 LES	£1200
J24 LES	£975
S28 LES	£1300
J800 LES	£875
C26 LEX	£775
LFB 428	£1300
E23 LFC	£775
325 LKR	£675
A25 LLA	£1300
D25 LLA	£875
E22 LLY	£1200
G24 LLY	£875
A25 LLY	£1400
A24 LOR	£775
G16 LOU	£1500
A26 LOU	£1600
P31 LOU	£1300
J121 LOU	£975
A21 LOV	£775
C21 LOV	£975
T8 LOW	£1900
G21 LOW	£1500
D9 LPH	£1300
LRT 657	£1300
A26 LSA	£875
E26 LSA	£975
L2 LUX	£1400
7785 LV	£1100
G4 LXY	£2600
A21 LYN	£2100
B21 LYN	£1300
C21 LYN	£1800
D21 LYN	£1600
F21 LYN	£1700
H21 LYN	£1300
G24 LYN	£1200
C25 MAB	£775
MAC 14L	£2400
R23 MAD	£1100
A25 MAD	£1400
C25 MAD	£1200
D26 MAD	£1300
G19 MAG	£1500
MAG 61M	£2300
V99 MAG	£1300
C20 MAL	£1500
D21 MAL	£1300
G21 MAL	£1100
H21 MAL	£1100
P88 MAL	£1400
G21 MAR	£975
J21 MAR	£1100
E22 MAR	£875
B23 MAR	£1100
C23 MAR	£1100
A26 MAS	£775
C15 MAT	£1900
E22 MAT	£1700
W10 MAX	£2600
D21 MAX	£1700
B11 MAY	£1300
C21 MAY	£975
D21 MAY	£1200
G21 MAY	£1200
A24 MAY	£1200
MB 517	£9500
3115 MC	£2900
A21 MCA	£1200
B21 MCA	£875
D21 MCA	£1200
S111 MCA	£1200
C21 MCB	£875
G26 MCD	£775
D21 MCH	£875
B23 MCK	£875
M66 MCK	£875
R8 MCN	£1500
A24 MCN	£875
MDW 855	£1600
M10 MEG	£1700
D26 MEG	£1200
H26 MEG	£1100
C44 MEG	£1300
D21 MEL	£1600
G23 MEL	£1400
K500 MEL	£875
V777 MEL	£975
C21 MER	£875
A24 MET	£1200
D9 MEW	£775
4495 MF	£1800
R9 MFS	£875
P9 MGB	£775
R1 MGF	£1100
C4 MGH	£1300
MIL 6299	£875
D21 MJB	£1100
G21 MJB	£975
F11 MJC	£1400
S19 MJC	£1200
A25 MJC	£1300
E26 MJC	£975
C17 MJD	£1300
L50 MJD	£1100
W55 MJH	£1100
Y29 MJS	£875
L45 MJS	£975
V321 MJS	£775
R8 MKC	£1100
A23 MKE	£775
1333 ML	£2200
A25 MLR	£775
A24 MMA	£975
MMW 157	£1300
E24 MMY	£875
S28 MMY	£2900
F7 MOB	£875
185 MOE	£1300
D24 MOR	£975
A26 MOR	£775
J21 MOS	£875
Y5 MOT	£775
C9 MOT	£975
N9 MOT	£875
MR 479	£7100
E3 MRS	£1900
7981 MT	£1700
8407 MT	£1600
MTP 89	£3500
A2 MTW	£1100
5882 MU	£875
E26 MUR	£875
681 MW	£6500
G5 MWB	£1300
2772 MY	£775
A24 MYY	£975
D21 NAH	£1100
A10 NAM	£975
B9 NAN	£1600
A25 NAN	£875
A7 NAR	£2300
J50 NAS	£1400
D10 NAT	£1900
H21 NAT	£1500
X44 NAV	£875
E8 NAY	£1500
A8 NDR	£1300
C25 NDY	£1200
D25 NDY	£975
557 NE	£4900
A24 NEE	£875
F21 NEL	£875
D24 NEL	£1100
D9 NJC	£1400
W11 NJC	£875
E5 NKY	£1300
H24 NKY	£975
C26 NKY	£775
H23 NLY	£775
NN 7271	£2100
C26 NON	£1300
A25 NTH	£1100
B26 OAK	£775
J5 OAN	£1900
J27 OCK	£875
N12 OEL	£1300
OFB 547	£775
D25 OLY	£775
H26 OLY	£875
A25 OME	£1200
H25 ONE	£775
W80 ONG	£975
D25 ORA	£775
L7 OWL	£875
A26 PAB	£775
M4 PAG	£1100
W8 PAH	£875
N2 PAM	£1500
E8 PAM	£1600
F11 PAM	£1300
PAM 73R	£1200
L100 PAM	£775
G21 PAR	£875
C26 PAR	£775
J7 PAS	£1500
N1 PAT	£2700
K8 PAT	£1900
R9 PAT	£1900
C18 PAT	£1300
M19 PAT	£1500
P19 PAT	£1700
K24 PAT	£1100
J28 PAT	£1400
R31 PAT	£1700
PAT 95W	£1200
T3 PAX	£975
R2 PAY	£975
E5 PCB	£1300
9214 PE	£1300
A25 PEN	£1400
D26 PEN	£875
2969 PG	£1400
5173 PG	£1300
K5 PGB	£975
PGW 23	£2700
PGW 234	£1700
8513 PH	£1500
8843 PH	£1600
9256 PJ	£1300
9804 PJ	£1200
788 PJH	£2300
9481 PK	£1500
1813 PL	£1500
9799 PL	£1300
C8 PLW	£1300
A2 PMH	£1500
J9 PMJ	£1300
N6 PMW	£1100
C7 PMW	£1200
M27 PMW	£775
5085 PP	£1100
6525 PP	£1300
L3 PPS	£1100
N1 PRG	£1100
X6 PRK	£875
H9 PRS	£875
PRU 684	£1200
N3 PSM	£975
B2 PTC	£975
C11 PTC	£875
7027 PU	£875
C25 PUD	£875
D26 PUG	£775
P7 PWH	£875
1368 R	£4500
J27 RAB	£875
C21 RAC	£875
A21 RAD	£1100
C21 RAD	£875
D26 RAD	£775
D12 RAH	£775
J555 RAJ	£775
C26 RAM	£1300
K14 RAY	£1500
D18 RAY	£1600
A23 RAY	£1600
B24 RAY	£1600
C24 RAY	£2300
T26 RAY	£875
S31 RAY	£1600
M50 RAY	£1400
55 RAY	£8300
RAY 76W	£1500
J90 RAY	£1200
RAY 842R	£875
RB 332	£11500
561 RBF	£1200
RBO 329	£675
A9 RCB	£875
J2 RCD	£875
H21 RCH	£775
L5 RCW	£1300
1268 RD	£2100
RD 4041	£2400
A7 RDC	£1500
31 RE	£9900
675 RE	£3900
907 RE	£3500
RE 1896	£1500
A23 REB	£775
A24 RED	£1300
B24 REN	£975
G24 REN	£775
A26 REN	£875
C1 REP	£1400
B21 RES	£875
A4 RET	£875
B25 RET	£875
845 RHA	£875
RIA 65	£3900
RIA 3408	£1500
RIJ 803	£675
RJ 951	£6900
D21 RJB	£875
A25 RJC	£875
RJI 988	£675
P2 RJN	£975
P24 RKR	£875
L1 RKS	£1500
RL 7024	£2300
W2 RLD	£1500
A11 RLD	£1300
B24 RLY	£975
RM 9559	£3400
RM 9807	£2800
R3 RMT	£875
A24 RMY	£875
K21 ROB	£1600
A24 ROB	£1700
L100 ROB	£975
K121 ROB	£875
J123 ROB	£1500
E15 ROD	£775
D24 ROD	£875
R40 ROD	£875
ROG 30R	£3300
N99 ROG	£775
D12 RON	£875
RON 49Y	£1500
S300 RON	£775
RON 853	£1800
W1 ROS	£3300
M16 ROS	£975
A21 ROS	£1300
C22 ROS	£875
D5 ROV	£775
ROY 8W	£2800
M12 ROY	£1500
S15 ROY	£1200
F19 ROY	£975
A21 ROY	£1600
ROY 66W	£1100
ROY 674	£1800
G322 RRY	£1300
V4 RSB	£1400
RT 3959	£3100
B26 RTY	£1100
H26 RTY	£1100
677 RU	£1600
4511 RU	£675
L19 RUS	£1300
C21 RUS	£1400
B23 RUS	£1200
5321 RW	£1900
8625 RW	£1800
N5 RWM	£975
A26 RYN	£975
D19 SAL	£775
A21 SAL	£1500
L31 SAL	£875
C25 SAM	£2500
G25 SAM	£2100
H25 SAM	£1900
A26 SAM	£3100
E26 SAM	£1800
B3 SAN	£2500
Y12 SAN	£875
A23 SAN	£1200
G17 SAR	£875
C26 SAR	£775
B24 SAS	£1100
C26 SAS	£875
J123 SAS	£775
D26 SAV	£875
SBX 668	£775
710 SC	£6500
4630 SC	£2500
G11 SCA	£875
Y4 SCP	£1100
W4 SCS	£1300
A24 SCT	£775
H3 SDP	£775
C24 SEB	£875
A25 SEB	£975
E26 SEB	£775
G1 SEC	£1700
X5 SEL	£1800
L9 SEL	£1300
H2 SET	£1300
C24 SET	£875
A25 SET	£1100
A1 SFB	£1700
F6 SGD	£975
R23 SHA	£2100
H26 SHA	£1300
A21 SHE	£1400
SHE 52S	£875
A24 SHH	£1300
X5 SHR	£875
A25 SHR	£1200
E25 SHY	£875
A23 SJB	£975
H26 SJB	£775
E10 SJC	£975
E21 SJH	£975
D26 SJH	£875
H26 SJH	£875
V4 SJM	£2100
H26 SJM	£1100
SJM 28S	£1200
Y66 SJM	£975
D26 SJW	£875
S1 SKW	£1200
A24 SKY	£1300
C25 SKY	£1100
SL 8177	£1700
SLK 1E	£3100
G7 SLK	£2100
V21 SLK	£1100
N23 SLK	£775
R11 SMH	£875
S3 SMT	£1500
A25 SOP	£775
SPV 410	£775
E25 SRA	£1200
A25 SRB	£775
A26 SRC	£775
K9 SRD	£775
A25 SSS	£875
E25 SSS	£975
ST 8438	£2900
S6 STN	£775
C26 STR	£875
D20 STS	£775
D41 STU	£1200
STY 15	£2800
H24 STY	£775
A24 SUE	£1600
F24 SUE	£1200
H24 SUE	£975
SUE 59G	£1400
SUE 79W	£1500
SUG 383	£675
C12 SUM	£875
A26 SUM	£775
R4 SUN	£1300
E8 SUS	£875
A2 SWH	£1300
SYA 441	£775
C26 TAM	£775
C8 TAN	£2500
A26 TAN	£975
C25 TAR	£875
V4 TCW	£1100
X8 TDB	£1300
N1 TED	£2300
V60 TED	£975
TEG 252	£875
E25 TEL	£875
TER 18S	£2500
C20 TES	£1300
9080 TF	£1300
TGL 1M	£1500
TIL 336	£675
T14 TLC	£775
G6 TMH	£775
A25 TOM	£1900
C26 TOM	£1800
B25 TON	£1200
C25 TON	£875
5316 TR	£1300
TRW 164	£1400
TTK 597	£1500
G4 TUG	£975
B12 TUG	£775
X50 TVR	£2500
TWP 941	£1100
UAR 196	£675
1895 UE	£675
ULL 871	£675
UPE 885	£675
B25 URK	£775
S3 VAL	£1800
L5 VAL	£1500
N11 VAL	£1300
C14 VAL	£875
P88 VAL	£975
174 VAL	£2900
263 VAL	£2500
A23 VAN	£1100
E23 VAN	£1400
VE 6787	£1400
VGX 126	£675
5714 VM	£1500
544 VPB	£675
VRX 39	£1900
5847 VU	£775
A25 WAL	£875
E23 WAR	£975
615 WAR	£1700
B10 WAT	£875
D24 WAT	£875
WC 77	£8250
1947 WD	£1500
8649 WD	£1300
16 WE	£11000
B21 WEB	£1300
A26 WEB	£1200
C26 WEB	£1200
D26 WEB	£1200
G26 WEB	£1100
WG 3646	£1100
L14 WHU	£775
A21 WHU	£875
WIL 370	£1400
WIL 2777	£675
WIL 8285	£675
E8 WJW	£1100
C26 WRD	£875
84 WS	£12500
WS 950	£6500
WSD 913	£875
249 WTW	£775
4444 WU	£1900
XDD 85	£1300
469 XHY	£675
6051 XJ	£675
XJA 20	£2500
XLB 38	£1600
YB 2063	£2500
YBP 844	£675
701 YKN	£675
7282 YZ	£875

REGISTRATIONS URGENTLY WANTED FOR IMMEDIATE PURCHASE

ROAD TEST RESULTS

Autocar's history of empirical road testing is the longest in the world. For more than a century, we have been verifying, scrutinising, describing and illustrating new cars in unparalleled detail. Driving impressions have always been a key part of this, around which the empirical tests have changed.

In pre-war years, we concerned ourselves with braking effort, gradient climbing capability and rolling resistance. Later our attention shifted to take in acceleration, top speed, stopping distance and cruising noise level.

Today we use the Horiba MIRA proving ground in the Midlands to take similar performance benchmarks of new cars – and we've recently expanded the test's remit to take in braking stamina over repeated stops and, in the case of electrified cars, DC rapid-charging performance and measured acceleration at both high and low indicated states of battery charge.

Our tests are designed first and foremost to assess the fitness for intended purpose of any given new car – and to do it better and more thoroughly than any other independent test there is.

You can dig deeper into that century of road testing with a subscription to the digital Autocar archive (visit themagazineshop.com/2025ED/ACA).

Matt Saunders, road test editor

STAR RATINGS EXPLAINED

Autocar star ratings aren't like those you may read elsewhere. We don't simply give the best car in any given class five stars, the worst one star and filter the rest in between.

Rather than thinking in entirely relative terms, we rank cars according to more abstract definitions of their performance, functionality and fitness for purpose, so that every particular verdict means something and has a degree of permanence.

We also penalise cars up to a star for what we consider particularly conspicuous and regressive failings concerning active safety systems or missing instrumentation or physical secondary controls.

☆ Hopeless, egregious. In some cases, potentially dangerous.
⯨ Appalling. An emphatic failure.
★ Very poor. Consistently flawed or seriously misconceived.
★⯨ Inadequate. Sub-standard in key areas.
★★ Mediocre. Acceptable at best.
★★⯨ Competent. Mostly average, with very few highlights.
★★★ Respectable. Consistently decent, with some strengths.
★★★⯨ Good. Well rounded and competitive in key areas.
★★★★ Very good. Sets some new class standards and misses few.
★★★★⯨ Excellent. Extends several key class standards.
★★★★★ Exceptional, unsurpassed. All but flawless.

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

ABARTH

500 Esseesse ★★★★☆ 25.3.09
Charm on a stick. Raucous and fun.
7.6 6.5 1135 35.8 -

500e Turismo ★★★⯨☆ 9.8.23
A stylish and entertaining pint-size EV but pricey and needs refining.
6.9 6.4 1395 - 142

595 Competizione ★★★⯨☆ 26.2.14
Great when it's good but tiring when it's bad.
7.5 6.4 1135 39.2 -

ALFA ROMEO

Giulia Quadrifoglio ★★★★⯨ 29.3.17
Everything you would want a fast Alfa Romeo saloon to be. A triumph.
4.5 3.2 1700 35.7 -

Stelvio 2.2D 210 Milano Edizione ★★★⯨☆ 3.1.18
Likeable, if short of class's usual refinements.
6.8 7.0 1815 49.7 -

Stelvio Quadrifoglio ★★★⯨☆ 9.1.19
A real driver's car, but it stretches SUV-related bounds of acceptability.
4.0 3.3 1931 31.9 -

Stelvio 2.0T 280 Veloce AWD ★★★★☆ 28.6.23
Short on premium refinement but meets its discreetly sporty brief well.
5.7 5.3 1784 32.2 -

ALPINE

A110 Première Edition ★★★★★ 16.5.18
Hilarious fun delivered in effusive and accessible fashion.
4.7 3.8 1125 45.6 -

A110 Légende GT ★★★★⯨ 9.3.22
The best fast A110 we've seen but not quite the definitive version.
4.8 3.9 1140 40.2 -

A110 R ★★★⯨☆ 15.11.23
Hardcore A110 has its lures but probably not enough of them for its price.
4.2 3.5 1094 39.7 -

ARIEL

Atom 4 ★★★★★ 9.10.19
Track-slayer is unrivalled for built-in quality and dynamic character.
3.2 2.4 680 39.2 -

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

ASTON MARTIN

Vantage ★★★★⯨ 18.9.24
Baby Aston grows up to spectacular effect. A machine of stunning breadth and likeability.
3.5 2.6 1745 28.5 -

DBS Superleggera ★★★★★ 21.11.18
Effortlessly fast and intoxicating to drive, the big Aston is better than ever.
3.7 2.7 1910 25.6 -

Vanquish ★★★★⯨ 26.3.25
Aston's blown V12 lives on in a devastatingly effective super-GT.
3.1 2.3 1951 25.8 -

DBX 707 ★★★★☆ 30.11.22
A better DBX to drive, but still leaves room for improvement.
3.3 2.8 2278 26.2 -

AUDI

A1 Sportback 35 TFSI S Line Style Edition ★★★⯨☆ 2.10.19
Luxury supermini lacks the polish to justify its high price.
7.9 8.4 1209 57.0 -

S3 Sportback ★★★⯨☆ 18.11.20
Audi delivers an effective if somewhat unlovable hot hatch.
4.8 4.2 1552 39.0 -

RS4 Avant ★★★★☆ 14.2.18
A hot estate that oozes class but is curiously short on charisma.
4.0 3.5 1790 36.7 -

S5 Launch Edition ★★★★☆ 15.1.25
Rounded sports saloon with a characterful V6 and new-found dose of driver appeal.
4.1 3.8 2027 33.7 -

A6 50 TFSIe Quattro S Line ★★★★☆ 5.1.22
Hybrid tech boosts saloon's refinement, charm and running credentials.
5.7 5.2 2077 45.4 34

S6 E-tron Avant Launch Edition ★★★⯨☆ 16.4.25
Strong technical showing is undermined by price and lack of discernible character.
3.7 2.9 2346 2.8 256

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

RS6 Avant GT ★★★★☆ 5.2.25
Retro visual charm meets unprecedented dynamism in big-hearted estate.
3.2 2.7 2144 26.3 -

A7 Sportback 50 TDI Quattro Sport ★★★⯨☆ 11.7.18
Easy on the eye and to live with but let down by stolid dynamics.
5.8 5.3 1880 53.1 -

A8 L 60 TFSIe Quattro Sport ★★★⯨☆ 17.6.20
Technically impressive but not as cosseting as a limo ought to be.
- - 2330 - -

E-tron 55 Quattro ★★★★⯨ 26.6.19
A rounded, uber-luxurious addition to the premium EV niche.
5.4 4.2 2569 - 218

E-tron S Quattro ★★★⯨☆ 2.6.21
A slick, tech-laden luxury operator but no dynamic landmark for EVs.
4.2 3.6 2643 - -

Q2 1.4 TFSI Sport ★★★⯨☆ 9.11.16
Fit for purpose but a less compelling option than it might have been.
8.1 8.2 1316 - -

SQ2 Quattro S Tronic ★★★★☆ 20.3.19
More fun than you might expect from a crossover or an Audi S model.
4.5 4.1 1530 34.5 -

Q4 E-tron 40 Sport ★★★⯨☆ 7.7.21
Practical, pleasant and efficient but not a superior premium product.
8.1 7.8 2112 - -

Q5 TDI Quattro 204PS S Line ★★★⯨☆ 14.5.25
Pleasant and competitive but no particular step forward.
6.7 7.1 2072 42.6 -

Q6 E-tron Quattro Edition 1 ★★★⯨☆ 2.10.24
EV is hard to love, easier to recommend, with good dynamics and strong EV credentials.
5.3 4.3 - 2.8 247

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

Q7 3.0 TDI Quattro S Line ★★★★☆ 12.8.15
Plush, suave and spacious but so-so to drive.
6.2 6.2 2245 - -

SQ7 4.0 TDI Quattro ★★★★⯨ 26.10.16
A class-topping blend of superlative comfort and usable performance.
5.1 4.5 2330 37.9 -

Q8 50 TDI S Line ★★★★☆ 26.9.18
Striking and effective SUV-coupé leaves us wanting more.
6.9 6.7 2285 40.1 -

R8 V10 Plus ★★★★☆ 30.12.15
Supercar grips and goes even harder but wants for its predecessor's delicacy.
3.1 2.6 1730 - -

S E-tron GT ★★★★☆ 2.4.25
Audi's super-EV holds great appeal in its purest form but isn't at the bleeding edge.
3.1 2.4 2361 2.8 262

BENTLEY

Bentayga W12 ★★★★⯨ 18.5.16
Versatile, genteel, luxurious SUV with a silken sporting edge.
4.9 4.4 2440 - -

Bentayga EWB Mulliner Blackline ★★★★☆ 24.4.24
Stretched SUV lacks the Mulsanne limo's charm but is a better luxury car by far.
4.4 3.8 2600 25.6 -

Continental GT Speed ★★★★☆ 22.12.21
Remains a wonderful grand tourer but can fall short as an entertainer.
3.4 2.7 2279 22.0 -

Continental GTC V8 S ★★★★⯨ 19.4.23
Sporty V8 execution adds vivacity to a car that makes you feel good.
3.6 3.2 2295 29.1 -

Continental GT Speed Hybrid First Edition ★★★★☆ 16.4.25
Electrons make fastest GT quicker but not necessarily better.
3.1 2.5 2462 28.0 47

Flying Spur Hybrid Mulliner ★★★★⯨ 17.8.22
Mightily convincing PHEV limo more than earns its Bentley wings.
4.4 3.9 2596 30.1 28

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Flying Spur Speed First Edition ★★★★☆ 21.5.25 Hulking V8 hybrid powertrain broadens Spur's remit and skyrockets performance.	3.2	2.7	2750	26.7	44

BMW

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
120 M Sport ★★★⯪☆ 31.12.24 Credible and complete junior BMW still lacks distinguishing driver appeal.	7.3	6.8	1489	45.8	-
218i M Sport Gran Coupé ★★★☆☆ 8.4.20 Junior Gran Coupé hits some high notes but fails to inspire.	8.8	8.4	1375	58.2	-
220i M Sport Coupé ★★★★☆ 1.6.22 A good coupé rather than a great sports car.	7.3	7.3	1546	46.8	-
M2 Coupé Manual ★★★★⯪ 12.7.23 Junior M car takes huge objective leaps but smaller subjective ones.	4.5	3.8	1687	32.1	-
320d M Sport Auto ★★★★★ 15.5.19 BMW's one-time default-choice executive saloon hits even greater heights.	6.9	6.8	1639	63.3	-
330d xDrive M Sport Plus Edition Touring ★★★★⯪ 15.1.20 An estate that's powerful, classy and great to drive – but with a price to match.	5.5	5.2	1922	52.6	-
330e M Sport ★★★★⯪ 1.7.20 Slicker and sweeter-handling than the average PHEV. A true 3 Series.	-	-	1740	-	-
M440i xDrive ★★★★☆ 6.1.21 A rounded, engaging and potent coupé let down only by its looks.	4.1	3.7	1775	44.0	-
M4 Competition ★★★★⯪ 21.4.21 A very modern M car and a brilliantly versatile and enjoyable one.	3.9	2.9	1800	32.7	-
M4 CS ★★★★☆ 23.4.25 Stunning performance and pace comes with costs that aren't so easy to justify.	2.9	2.5	1747	32.4	-
i4 M50 ★★★★☆ 19.1.22 Fast, refined and with lots of traditional appeal to convert sceptics.	4.1	3.2	2248	-	186
M4 CSL ★★★★☆ 16.11.22 A next-level M car, with the more complex temperament to match.	3.6	2.7	1625	31.1	-
M5 ★★★⯪☆ 29.1.25 A technical leap, but one born more out of necessity than inspiration.	3.5	2.8	2373	27.3	35
i5 eDrive40 M Sport Pro ★★★⯪☆ 29.11.23 Has dynamic appeal but less convincing than BMW's other EV saloons.	5.4	4.4	2213	-	235
550e xDrive M Sport Pro ★★★★☆ 3.4.24 Undeniably capable and a fine plug-in hybrid sports saloon.	4.4	3.5	2232	40.1	47
i7 xDrive60 M Sport ★★★★⯪ 15.2.23 It has taken huge strides as a luxury car – and still drives like a BMW.	4.5	3.4	2758	-	264
840d xDrive ★★★★☆ 16.1.19 A likeable big GT, albeit not the most luxurious or rewarding on sale.	5.0	4.6	1901	49.2	-
M8 Competition Convertible ★★★⯪☆ 5.2.20 Has attitude to spare but isn't the complete super-GT.	3.3	2.7	2020	31.6	-
M8 Competition ★★★⯪☆ 3.6.20 Highly capable but doesn't truly satisfy as either a sports car or a GT.	-	-	1960	-	-
X1 xDrive23i M Sport ★★★⯪☆ 25.1.23 A decent family crossover but a poor BMW.	6.4	6.0	1800	45.6	-
X4 M Competition ★★★☆☆ 13.11.19 Fast and precise, if short on the big-time charisma that you would expect.	4.0	3.3	2028	29.0	-
X5 xDrive30d M Sport ★★★★☆ 2.1.19 Better to drive than the SUV norm but not better across the board.	6.6	6.6	2279	43.1	-
X6 M Competition ★★★☆☆ 20.3.24 Unyielding performance focus makes for a fast but compromised SUV.	3.5	3.1	2442	29.3	-
X7 M60i xDrive ★★★★☆ 29.3.23 Uncompromising-looking X7 is seriously fast but laudably refined.	4.2	3.7	2600	28.9	-
iX xDrive50 M Sport ★★★★⯪ 2.3.22 Takes the luxury EV to elevated heights, but its design is easy to criticise.	4.4	3.4	2593	-	252
Z4 M40i with Handschalter Pack ★★★★☆ 21.8.24 Manual gearbox gives six-year-old roadster new depth.	5.7	5.9	1561	36.9	-

BMW ALPINA

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
B3 GT Touring ★★★★⯪ 15.1.25 Last-dance B3 has mighty breadth and will go down as one of the all-time greats.	3.3	2.7	1910	29.4	-
B8 Gran Coupé ★★★★☆ 22.9.21 Superbly rounded but lacking some dynamism implied by its looks.	3.5	2.8	2100	-	-

BYD

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Atto 3 Design ★★★☆☆ 31.5.23 Lack of attention to detail detracts from the impressive battery tech.	7.0	6.2	1787	-	201
Seal Design ★★★⯪☆ 17.1.24 Frustrating software lets down the mostly impressive hardware.	5.8	4.7	2116	-	279

CATERHAM

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Seven 160 ★★★★☆ 20.11.13 Fun entry-level version of B-road toy smacks just a little of compromise.	8.4	8.7	510	44.8	-
Seven 620S ★★★★⯪ 9.3.16 Supplies fun intravenously with a mix of freneticism and road-going usability.	3.8	4.2	650	29.5	-
Seven 420 Cup ★★★★⯪ 31.8.22 Track-day variant serves up sensational driving thrills – for a price.	4.2	3.4	560	35.3	-

CHEVROLET

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Corvette 3LT ★★★★☆ 22.6.22 Big step up for charismatic, usable and temptingly priced American icon.	3.9	3.2	1679	32.9	-
Corvette Z06 3LZ ★★★★☆ 16.8.23 Incredible engine and chassis makeover, but the price has to be right.	3.1	2.4	1670	26.1	-

CITROEN

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Ami Colour ★★⯪☆☆ 11.1.23 Cleverly conceived but hard to recommend, given its limited capabilities.	-	-	471	-	39
ë-C3 Max ★★★⯪☆ 30.4.25 Predictable limitations but also plenty of usability, space and cheer for the money.	10.7	10.3	1479	2.8	-
C3 Aircross Puretech 110 Flair ★★★⯪☆ 7.3.18 Practical small crossover isn't outstanding to drive but is likeable nonetheless.	11.5	10.7	1159	39.5	-
C4 Puretech 130 Shine Plus Auto ★★★☆☆ 26.5.21 Has rational and irrational appeal but lacks a fine-tuned execution.	9.5	9.2	1320	56.4	-
ë-C4 X Shine ★★★⯪☆ 3.5.23 EV motoring done differently, with value, but its successes are qualified.	9.7	8.8	1623	-	162
C5 Aircross BlueHDi 180 Flair Plus ★★★⯪☆ 13.2.19 Attractive and interesting, although its style is better than its substance.	9.0	8.5	1540	47.8	-
C5 X Puretech 180 Shine Plus ★★★★☆ 28.9.22 Good value and comfy, this is the kind of car that Citroën should be making.	7.8	7.1	1502	47.8	-

CUPRA

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Born 204PS 58kWh V3 ★★★⯪☆ 6.7.22 As good as the family hatchback EV class gets in places but not as good as it could be.	6.7	6.2	1794	-	220
Born VZ First Edition ★★★★☆ 9.10.24 An already fine electric car's driver appeal is lifted but not transformed.	5.4	4.2	1996	3.5	269
Leon Estate 310PS VZ3 ★★★★☆ 8.9.21 Fiercely quick and dependable but pulls the heartstrings only lightly.	4.9	4.3	1707	40.1	-
Leon 2.0 TSI 245PS VZ2 ★★★★☆ 27.7.22 Brilliantly rounded hot hatch shines in its simplest spec.	5.9	4.7	1468	43.4	-
Ateca 2.0 TSI 4Drive DSG ★★★⯪☆ 23.1.19 Hot crossover is objectively impressive but lacks true driver reward.	4.9	4.4	1615	36.7	-
Formentor 2.0 TSI 4Drive VZ2 DSG ★★★★⯪ 3.2.21 Versatile, interesting, rewarding. One of the best fast crossovers yet.	5.1	4.3	1583	36.4	-
Terramar 2.0 TSI 4Drive VZ2 ★★★★☆ 18.6.25 Hottish cousin of the Volkswagen Tiguan is likeable but a bit too sensible.	5.6	5.1	1737	35.0	-
Tavascan V1 ★★★☆☆ 5.2.25 Electric SUV is competent but not very compelling or memorable.	6.0	5.0	2129	3.2	246

DACIA

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Sandero Stepway TCe 90 Prestige ★★★★☆ 28.4.21 Cut-price crossover is compromised in surprisingly few areas.	11.9	11.9	1096	54.1	-
Jogger TCe 110 Comfort ★★★★⯪ 20.4.22 Superb versatility, outstanding value and so likeable with it.	11.0	11.0	1267	48.5	-
Duster Hybrid 140 Journey ★★★★⯪ 27.11.24 Notably improved yet barely any pricier.	9.7	8.7	1413	40.2	-
Bigster Hybrid 155 Journey ★★★★☆ 11.6.25 Big Duster in name, big Duster in nature.	8.9	7.8	-	47.5	-

DS

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
3 Crossback Puretech 155 Prestige ★★★☆☆ 10.7.19 No design smash hit. Short on perceived quality and dynamic polish.	8.8	8.3	1205	48.6	-
4 E-Tense 225 Performance Line+ ★★★⯪☆ 29.6.22 High price and a list of niggles keep this family hatchback away from the top.	7.4	6.0	1706	44.7	26
7 Crossback Puretech 225 Prestige ★★★⯪☆ 19.9.18 DS's first SUV is a competent but slightly bland addition to the class.	8.6	7.0	1616	44.6	-
7 E-Tense 4x4 360 La Première ★★★⯪☆ 26.4.23 More focused and makes subtle gains, but its powertrain and ride frustrate.	5.7	4.6	1956	36.6	29
9 E-Tense 225 Performance Line Plus ★★★⯪☆ 2.2.22 Posh saloon is alternative and devoted to its luxury remit but no show-stopper.	8.6	7.1	1886	44.7	20

FERRARI

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
296 GTB ★★★★★ 21.12.22 Stellar modern-era Ferrari supercar has an unrivalled breadth of talent.	2.7	1.9	1648	37.8	15
SF90 Stradale ★★★★☆ 3.11.21 Sets the performance benchmark but isn't a track-handling great.	2.5	1.8	1698	24.4	16

FIAT

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
500 Twinair Lounge ★★★⯪☆ 24.11.10 Characterful and stylish, but its real-world economy lets it down.	11.7	13.0	1070	42.1	-
500e 42kWh Icon ★★★★☆ 26.1.22 More than just an electric city car and a welcome return to form.	8.1	7.7	1365	-	142
600e La Prima ★★★⯪☆ 27.3.24 Electric crossover is decent value and easy to drive but otherwise a bit easy to overlook.	8.8	7.7	1587	-	173

FORD

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Focus 1.5 Ecoboost 182PS ST-Line X	★★★★½	20.2.19	Better to drive and look at than before and impressively good value.	8.9	7.8	1417	43.8	-
Focus ST	★★★★☆	11.9.19	Big on character and performance but not quite truly immersive.	6.1	4.9	1433	40.7	-
Puma 1.0T 125PS MHEV Titanium	★★★★½	25.3.20	The driver's car the compact crossover class has been crying out for and more besides.	10.0	9.6	1260	50.0	-
Puma Gen-E Select	★★★★☆	4.6.25	Ford finally brings engagement to the small EV class.	7.2	7.2	-	3.4	179
Puma ST	★★★★☆	24.3.21	Well judged, versatile and fun. The jacked-up hot hatch done well.	7.2	6.2	1301	41.5	-
Explorer Extended Range Premium RWD	★★★½☆	23.10.24	Electric family crossover is better to drive than rivals, but at a cost.	5.8	4.8	2067	2.9	262
Kuga 2.5 PHEV ST-Line	★★★½☆	24.6.20	Good value and potentially frugal, but this SUV has more to give.	-	-	1844	-	-
Mustang Mach-E Extended Range RWD	★★★★☆	23.6.21	Worthy of the name? Perhaps not, but it's still impressive and likeable.	6.8	5.6	2130	-	-
Mustang Mach-E GT AWD	★★★☆☆	27.4.22	Has its moments but lacks the dynamism of a typical fast Ford.	4.2	3.5	2298	-	-
Mustang Dark Horse	★★★½☆	20.11.24	Brimming with character but more compromised than many of its forebears.	4.5	3.5	1853	26.1	-
Tourneo Courier 1.0 Ecoboost Titanium	★★★½☆	10.7.24	Has some Ford-typical star quality but not enough for the money.	10.8	10.6	1426	47.4	-
Tourneo Connect 1.5 Ecoboost PHEV Titanium	★★★½☆	2.7.25	PHEV power is a smart choice in this versatile, though expensive, utility MPV.	9.7	9.5	1876	40.3	64
Transit Custom L2H1 320 2.0 EcoBlue 150PS Limited	★★★★☆	8.5.24	Likely to remain the default commercial vehicle, despite a high price.	12.1	11.8	1971	38.8	-
Ranger 2.0TD EcoBlue 205PS Wildtrak	★★★★½	14.6.23	Pick-up truck is practical, car-like to drive and generally hard to fault.	9.8	9.9	2348	36.6	-

GENESIS

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
G70 2.2 CRDi Luxury Line	★★★½☆	10.11.21	Likeable left-field choice struggles to threaten the establishment.	7.2	6.7	1751	60.4	-
Electrified G80	★★★½☆	12.10.22	Electric limo doesn't quite hit the mark like its Kia and Hyundai platform-mates.	4.4	4.0	2349	-	272
GV60 Sport Plus	★★★★☆	24.8.22	Handsome, fast, sophisticated electric crossover is the best Genesis yet.	3.8	3.1	2192	-	220
GV80 3.0D Luxury 5-Seater	★★★½☆	15.9.21	Rich, spacious and comfortable but not a world-class luxury SUV yet.	6.7	6.6	2217	45.0	-

GWM

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Ora Funky Cat 48kWh First Edition	★★½☆☆	1.2.23	Electric hatch is decent value and has funky looks but is a mediocre experience overall.	7.7	7.2	1580	-	154

HONDA

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
E Advance	★★★½☆	26.8.20	More than just a pretty face in the EV crowd but its limited range is an issue.	7.9	-	1535	-	110
Jazz 1.5 i-MMD Hybrid EX	★★★½☆	7.10.20	Eminently practical, impressively frugal and pretty joyless to drive.	9.6	10.0	1248	57.0	-
Civic Type R GT	★★★★½	25.10.17	Hot hatch is a sheer delight for enthusiast drivers and their bank balances.	5.7	7.1	1400	57.0	-
HR-V e:HEV Advance Style	★★★½☆	24.11.21	Fine ergonomics and big on superficial charm but leaves us cold.	9.2	9.3	1397	43.2	-
e:Ny1 Advance	★★★☆☆	1.11.23	EV is charming in some ways but has too little substance to justify the price.	8.6	6.9	1756	-	211

HYUNDAI

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
i10 1.2 MPi Premium	★★★★☆	15.4.20	Smallest Hyundai regains leadership of the city car class.	12.3	12.9	999	52.5	-
i20 1.0 T-GDi 100 48V SE Connect	★★★½☆	24.2.21	Steady gains for a versatile runabout still lacking some personality.	9.7	10.1	1065	63.5	-
i20 N	★★★★½	25.8.21	N division's finest car to date. A serious hot hatch with real dynamic polish.	6.1	5.4	1231	50.6	-
i30 Tourer 1.4 T-GDi Premium SE	★★★½☆	13.9.17	Competent, servile, inoffensive-looking family estate offers little to like or dislike.	9.5	9.7	1425	48.9	-
Ioniq 6 RWD Ultimate	★★★½☆	7.6.23	Usable, rangy and innovative EV let down by cabin packaging and ride.	7.2	6.2	2006	-	272
Kona 1.0 120PS Advance	★★★★☆	6.9.23	Hyundai brings some cheer, value and space to the compact crossover class.	10.4	10.3	1352	50.4	-
Tucson 1.6 T-GDi Hybrid Premium	★★★★☆	17.3.21	Tucson shows that Hyundai can do both style and substance.	7.6	6.2	1612	47.7	-
Ioniq 5 N	★★★★★	7.8.24	A little big and heavy, but compelling like no other EV to date.	3.5	2.7	2221	-	224
Santa Fe Hybrid 4WD Premium	★★★★☆	16.10.24	A superb lounge on wheels, but let down by its powertrain.	7.9	7.5	2007	32.9	-
Nexo	★★★½☆	12.6.19	Impressive effort that heads in the right direction for hydrogen fuel cell cars.	9.6	9.7	1852	-	-

INEOS

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Grenadier 3.0 T Fieldmaster	★★★½☆	20.9.23	Unquestionably a serious proposition but maybe lacking in innovation.	8.0	8.1	2682	20.9	-

JAECOO

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
7 SHS 2WD Luxury	★★½☆☆	9.4.25	Chinese PHEV SUV is efficient and keenly priced but has too many usability flaws.	7.3	6.4	1814	35.0	41

JAGUAR

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
XE 2.0 200PS R-Sport	★★★★½	1.7.15	Junior saloon hits the spot, matching the best of its German rivals at their own game.	7.6	6.7	1530	48.7	-
XF Sportbrake 300PS R-Sport AWD	★★★½☆	17.4.19	Estate is built on enthusiast values but in need of a wider update.	6.6	6.2	1727	36.8	-
E-Pace D180 AWD SE	★★★½☆	11.4.18	Misses the mark for keen drivers but is a desirable SUV nevertheless.	9.9	10.5	1768	49.2	-
I-Pace EV400 S	★★★★½	12.9.18	Jaguar's landmark car strikes a heavy blow to Tesla's luxury EV monopoly.	4.5	3.5	2236	-	-
F-Pace SVR	★★★★½	24.7.19	Broad-batted and can vividly thrill but hasn't forgotten its SUV roots.	4.1	3.5	2070	29.4	-
F-Pace 400e R-Dynamic HSE	★★★★½	1.12.21	Facelift hits the mark. Electrification is a mixed but creditable success.	5.1	4.6	2264	-	24
F-Type P575 R AWD Coupé	★★★★☆	29.4.20	The same likeable bruiser behind those prettier features.	-	-	1743	-	-

JEEP

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Avenger Electric Summit	★★★½☆	24.1.24	Not perfect but successfully takes Jeep in a fresh direction.	8.3	6.9	1601	-	172
Compass 2.0 Multijet II 140 4WD Limited	★★★½☆	3.10.18	Pricey, pokey, gruff Jeep is a long shot for SUV market success.	11.0	11.5	1540	44.8	-
Compass 4xe S	★★★☆☆	16.2.22	Not without niche appeal but off the pace in too many respects.	6.4	5.7	1872	46.9	22
Renegade 2.0 Multijet II 140 4WD Limited	★★★½☆	28.10.15	Charmingly authentic but also pricey and rather rough and ready.	10.8	11.2	1502	52.6	-
Renegade 4xe Trailhawk	★★★☆☆	30.6.21	Electrified Jeep has some charm but is typically rough and ready.	6.7	5.6	1816	39.4	21
Wrangler 2.2 Multijet II Overland	★★★★☆	10.4.19	Off-road icon is now more competent on it.	9.0	9.1	2122	37.6	-

KGM

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Tivoli XLV ELX Auto	★★★☆☆	14.9.16	Practical, well-priced crossover is competent but far from compelling.	12.0	12.6	1469	-	-
Torres 1.5T K40 AWD	★★½☆☆	4.6.25	Cheerful enough, although not as cheap or capable as we had hoped.	11.3	12.0	1661	35.0	-

KIA

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Picanto 1.0 MPI 2	★★★½☆	11.9.24	No great advance for the breed but likeable, capable and still here.	13.4	13.9	985	51.4	-
Ceed 1.6 CRDi 115bhp 2	★★★★☆	29.8.18	Big step up in the family hatchback class is a watershed moment for Kia.	9.9	9.6	1411	70.3	-

TOP 3

BEST-SELLING CARS

1 Ford Puma

2 Kia Sportage

3 Nissan Qashqai

SCAN THE CODE TO SEE THE TOP 10

Road tests revisited

2011 McLAREN MP4-12C

F1 team returns to the road with a Ferrari 458 Italia rival. "Making a car that is capable of lapping a track as quickly as a BTCC racer is quite a feat. But the most astonishing aspect of the 12C is that it can do that yet rides with a quality that is at times the equal of an S-Class."

Price £227,010
Engine V8, 3799cc, twin-turbo, petrol
Power 592bhp at 7000rpm
Torque 442lb ft at 3000-7000rpm
Weight 1470kg
0-60mph 3.3sec
0-150mph 15.3sec
Top speed 205mph
Economy 18.9mpg

1985 FORD SIERRA XR4x4

Sporting XR4i version of saloon is given four-wheel drive. "It has the Audi Quattro licked. It performs better, handles just as well and offers better ride and passenger comfort for the money. An unbeatable package for anyone who really enjoys driving."

Price £12,040
Engine V6, 2792cc, petrol
Power 150bhp at 7500rpm
Torque 159lb ft at 3800rpm
Weight 1418kg
0-60mph 8.4sec
0-100mph 25.0sec
Top speed 126mph
Economy 20.4mpg

READ FULL ROAD TEST FOR FREE*

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Proceed 1.4 T-GDi GT-Line S	★★★½☆	27.2.19	Alluring and interesting but not quite as special to drive as it looks.	9.5	8.9	1475	42.6	-
Xceed 1.4 T-GDi First Edition	★★★½☆	20.11.19	Looks good and drives well yet lacks some practicality and polish.	9.3	8.7	1452	46.8	-
Soul EV Urban	★★★½☆	5.7.23	Not actually that cheap but likeable and complete.	8.0	8.3	1569	-	147
Niro EV 3	★★★★☆	7.9.22	A good family EV made better, despite some missed opportunities.	6.9	5.6	1739	-	246
EV3 81.4kWh GT-Line	★★★★☆	31.12.24	New-era Niro is rationally compelling although it's not a game-changer.	7.2	6.4	1858	2.6	265
Sportage 1.6 HEV 2WD GT-Line S	★★★½☆	15.6.22	Bold family SUV catches the eye but won't hold your interest to drive.	7.3	6.4	1658	44.8	-
EV6 77.4kWh RWD GT-Line S	★★★★☆	9.10.24	Not the outstanding EV it once was yet still a likeably bold choice.	7.5	6.3	-	2.9	227
EV6 GT	★★★½☆	4.10.23	Lots of pace and usability for the money but not enough driver appeal.	3.6	2.7	2161	-	209
Sorento 1.6 HEV T-GDi AWD 2	★★★½☆	20.1.21	Lacks polish, although its abundant utility appeal and value shine through.	8.5	7.9	2006	43.3	-
EV9 GT-Line S	★★★★☆	31.1.24	Style, space, versatility and range for a more reasonable price than rivals.	5.1	4.6	2660	-	220
LAMBORGHINI								
Huracán Performante	★★★★½	11.10.17	Breathtaking track makeover brings it close to greatness.	2.9	2.0	1590	22.4	-
Huracán Evo RWD	★★★★½	20.5.20	Finest driver's car Lamborghini makes is also the most attainable.	-	-	1389	-	-
Revuelto	★★★★½	4.12.24	New-era V12 Lamborghini is an extraordinary statement of intent.	2.5	1.7	1960	24.1	6
Urus	★★★★☆	3.7.19	Italy's latest 'mostro' has a driving experience to blow your mind.	3.3	2.8	2285	28.5	-
LAND ROVER								
Range Rover Evoque P300e R-Dynamic HSE	★★★★½	10.2.21	A better plug-in compact SUV. Expensive but slick and luxurious.	6.8	5.9	2158	32.7	24
Discovery Sport D180 AWD SE	★★★★☆	8.1.20	Off-road fidelity and character outweigh a lacklustre powertrain.	10.3	10.5	2145	47.5	-
Discovery TD6 HSE Luxury	★★★★½	12.4.17	A proper Land Rover, modernised, refined and as likeable as ever.	8.7	8.8	2230	-	-
Range Rover Velar D240 HSE	★★★½☆	30.8.17	Stylish, advanced and accomplished but in need of a better powertrain.	9.3	9.0	2089	48.2	-
Defender 110 P400 X	★★★★½	13.5.20	World-class capability. Brilliant on and off road – at a price.	-	-	2388	-	-
Defender 110 P635 Octa Edition 1	★★★★½	30.4.25	Outrageous, unnecessary and totally awe-inspiring.	4.6	3.7	2717	22.1	-
Range Rover Sport D300 Dynamic SE	★★★★½	2.11.22	Deeply appealing and deeply accomplished, with a price to match.	7.2	6.6	2511	42.5	-
Range Rover Sport SV Edition One	★★★½☆	28.8.24	More capable than most rivals, but others are more compelling.	3.9	5.1	2546	28.9	-
Range Rover D350 HSE	★★★★½	13.7.22	A fantastically well-isolated luxury car and fully paid-up capable 4x4.	6.3	6.0	2667	35.9	-
Range Rover P550e Autobiography	★★★★☆	9.4.25	A unique and enthralling character that brings added refinement in PHEV form.	4.9	4.0	2979	26.6	44
LEXUS								
LBX FWD Premium Plus Design	★★★½☆	29.5.24	Crossover convinces as a small premium car, but only just.	8.4	8.4	1306	45.2	-
NX 350h AWD Premium Plus Pack	★★★★☆	16.3.22	Interesting, refined and efficient, although not as polished as the best.	7.1	6.7	1812	44.7	-
RX 500h F Sport	★★★½☆	22.3.23	Classy and luxurious, but that might not be enough for keener drivers.	6.1	5.5	2088	31.7	-
ES 300h Takumi	★★★½☆	6.2.19	Boldly styled, economical saloon has a singularly rational but dry character.	8.7	7.6	1742	48.8	-
RC F Ultimate Edition	★★★½☆	6.11.24	Bellows in some ways, whispers in others. A little flawed but never dull or boring.	4.7	3.8	1733	30.1	-
LM 350h AWD Takumi	★★★☆☆	7.2.24	MPV is a fascinating luxury-market curio but no threat to the old-school limo.	8.6	8.2	2368	40.5	-
LOTUS								
Emira V6 First Edition	★★★★½	2.4.25	The British sports car is alive, well and expensive.	4.4	4.0	1493	29.0	-
Emeya 600 GT	★★★★☆	28.5.25	A good electric saloon and a good Lotus.	4.1	2.8	2478	2.4	218
Eletre R	★★★½☆	24.7.24	There's plenty to like about the new Lotus but little sign of the old Lotus.	3.1	2.2	2682	-	216
MASERATI								
Ghibli Diesel	★★★½☆	12.3.14	Saloon isn't lacking in style but is a little short on substance.	6.5	6.0	2040	40.4	-
Grecale Trofeo	★★★½☆	18.10.23	A belting engine but high-priced and not the best-driving Grecale.	3.6	3.2	2097	33.6	-
Levante Diesel	★★★☆☆	30.11.16	A mildly interesting also-ran, with a weak engine and so-so handling.	6.8	6.9	2205	41.5	-
Levante S Granlusso	★★★½☆	8.5.19	Better engine improves the class's curate's egg but can't redeem it.	5.1	4.5	2232	23.7	-
Granturismo Trofeo	★★★½☆	11.9.24	An appealing grand tourer that lacks some sophistication for the price.	3.6	3.1	-	33.0	-
Granturismo Folgore	★★★½☆	26.2.25	Assured and likeable but could only ever be bought with the heart – even sans V8.	2.9	2.3	2358	2.3	183
MC20 Cielo	★★★★☆	16.10.24	Dynamic iconoclast, old-school charmer, occasional GT. A unique supercar.	4.0	2.8	1783	29.6	-
MAZDA								
2 1.5 Skyactiv-G 90PS SE-L Nav	★★★★☆	22.4.15	The go-to option for keen drivers is also a convincing all-rounder.	10.4	11.0	1050	-	-
3 2.0 Skyactiv-X 181PS GT Sport	★★★★☆	6.11.19	Sweet to drive and great to behold, but the Skyactiv-X engine is no knockout.	9.1	9.1	1425	57.0	-
MX-30 145PS GT Sport Tech	★★★½☆	10.3.21	Has smart looks and a plush interior, but the first Mazda EV deserved more.	9.1	8.6	1663	-	-
CX-30 2.5 e-Skyactiv G Exclusive-Line	★★★★☆	19.2.25	Alternative powertrain is a credit to this voluble, unconventional compact SUV.	7.6	7.6	1422	45.2	-
CX-5 2.2D 150PS 2WD Sport Nav	★★★★☆	28.6.17	Still moderately left of field but now likeable in greater proportions.	9.4	9.2	1620	53.9	-
CX-60 e-Skyactiv D 3.3 RWD Exclusive-Line	★★★½☆	10.5.23	Old-school in all the best ways, but the ride is difficult to overlook.	7.6	7.2	1893	52.3	-
MX-5 1.5 SE-L Nav	★★★★½	2.9.15	An outstanding and usable sports car at an outstanding price.	8.4	7.9	1050	-	-
McLAREN								
720S	★★★★★	24.5.17	Sufficiently complete and exciting to dominate rivals and hugely fast.	2.9	2.0	1419	24.2	-

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*For three weeks from publication date

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

750S ★★★★☆ 19.6.24
McLaren's mainstay is a bit of a wild child – at times, to its own cost.
2.9 2.0 1412 28.8 -

Artura ★★★★⯪ 19.10.22
Brilliantly packaged, invitingly poised and wise use of electrification.
3.2 2.1 1552 32.9 17

Artura Spider ★★★★⯪ 6.11.24
Artura finds extra form in convertible guise.
3.1 2.2 1618 27.2 17

GT ★★★⯪☆ 27.1.21
Plenty of pace and purity, less GT-typical usability and refinement.
3.3 2.3 1580 34.2

MERCEDES-AMG

A45 S 4Matic+ Plus ★★★★⯪ 4.3.20
AMG brings its hottest hatch yet to life without harming usability.
4.1 3.3 1661 41.5 -

C63 S E Performance 4Matic+ Night Edition Premium Plus Estate
★★★☆☆ 31.7.24
Fascinating engineering feat falls flat as an exciting super-estate.
3.3 2.8 2217 27.1 7.1

GT 63 4Matic+ 4-Door Coupé
★★★★⯪ 13.3.19
AMG defies physics with a four-door GT that handles beautifully.
3.3 2.7 2135 30.1 -

GT 63 S E Performance 4-Door Coupé
★★★⯪☆ 21.6.23
Rocket-ship GT with astonishing powertrain but still lacks driver reward.
2.9 2.5 2339 23.9 6

EQS 53 4Matic+ Night Edition
★★★★☆ 8.6.22
Good but doesn't quite live up to its spectacular on-paper potential.
3.6 2.8 2673 - 259

S63 E Performance Night Edition
★★★★☆ 2.10.24
Prodigiously quick, confoundingly slick in its handling, but has a coarseness to it.
3.5 2.7 2666 26.1 -

GLE 53 4Matic+ Premium Plus
★★★⯪☆ 14.10.20
Remarkable dynamic versatility but lacks some driver appeal.
5.4 4.9 2471 29.4 -

SL 63 4Matic+ Premium Plus
★★★⯪☆ 26.7.23
Stonking V8 doesn't quite redeem a car of as many sacrifices as gains.
3.5 2.8 1939 26.2 -

GT 63 4Matic+ Premium Plus Coupé
★★★⯪☆ 14.8.24
Fearsomely quick and truly usable but less lovable than before.
3.1 2.7 1972 30.7 -

MERCEDES-BENZ

A200 AMG Line Executive
★★★★☆ 24.5.23
Significant progress for a keen-handling and efficient premium hatch.
7.8 7.3 1396 59.3 -

A250e AMG Line Premium
★★★☆☆ 5.8.20
Falls some way short of a rounded 'premium' driving experience.
6.7 5.4 1665 57.8 -

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

B180 Sport ★★★★☆ 3.4.19
In an ever-shrinking niche, this compact MPV deserves consideration.
8.4 8.3 1405 51.3 -

CLA 250 AMG Line Premium Plus
★★★☆☆ 21.8.19
Nearer the mark to look at but still way wide of it as a driver's car.
6.8 6.1 1555 48.3 -

C300e AMG Line ★★★★⯪ 4.5.22
Long-range hybrid tech gives C-Class an outstanding selling point.
5.8 5.1 2005 49.0 48

E220d AMG Line Premium Plus
★★★★☆ 3.1.24
An effective blend of convention, comfort, luxury and modernity.
7.2 5.9 1917 65.8 -

E450d Estate Exclusive Premium Plus
★★★★⯪ 19.3.25
Big-hearted diesel has speed, space and opulence. The only car you would ever need.
4.9 4.3 2167 46.1 -

EQE 350+ AMG Line Premium Plus
★★★⯪☆ 4.1.23
Hot on comfort and tech but lacklustre on range, material quality and space.
6.0 5.5 2386 - 262

EQS 450+ Business Class
★★★★☆ 7.5.25
Progress has been made, but this limousine still isn't quite the ultimate luxury EV.
5.9 4.9 2608 2.6 248

EQS 450 Business Class SUV
★★★⯪☆ 6.3.24
Ultra-luxurious seven-seater strays confusingly into MPV territory.
5.5 5.2 2899 - 265

S580e L AMG Line Premium Plus Executive ★★★★⯪ 6.4.22
Plug-in S-Class is the best of an otherwise ordinary generation.
5.2 4.2 2530 37.0 45

EQA 250 AMG Line Premium Plus
★★★☆☆ 17.11.21
Competent but entirely average. For the money, we expect better.
8.4 7.6 2030 - 200

GLB 220d 4Matic AMG Line Premium
★★★⯪☆ 16.9.20
Smart looking and practical but its identity feels stretched at times.
7.4 7.1 1810 55.4 -

EQB 300 4Matic AMG Line Premium
★★★⯪☆ 18.5.22
A versatile premium EV that doesn't easily command its premium.
7.7 6.8 2235 - -

GLC 300 4Matic AMG Line Premium Plus ★★★⯪☆ 13.9.23
Shines in places but doesn't notably elevate the GLC proposition.
6.5 6.0 1929 41.2 -

GLS 400d 4Matic AMG Line Premium
★★★⯪☆ 12.2.20
Has much to commend it but not enough to be the S-Class of SUVs.
6.5 6.0 2634 38.2 -

G350d AMG Line ★★★★☆ 17.7.19
Customary capability, charm and ego, now with 21st-century luxury.
7.5 7.2 2451 31.3 -

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

G500 AMG Line Premium Plus
★★★★☆ 25.9.24
Anachronistic, iconoclastic and expensive but very hard not to love.
5.1 4.5 - 30.7 -

CLE 300e AMG Line Premium Plus Coupé ★★★★☆ 13.11.24
Electrification brings traditional Merc strengths to a desirable mid-sized coupé.
6.1 5.5 2122 37.1 49

MG

3 Hybrid+ Trophy ★★★⯪☆ 12.6.24
Good value and with no serious vices but still lacks a final layer of polish.
6.8 6.2 1311 47.9 -

4 EV Long Range SE ★★★★☆ 5.4.23
Good value, useful and fun to drive to boot.
7.1 6.1 1692 - 185

5 SW EV Exclusive ★★★⯪☆ 25.11.20
MG's second EV does cheap motoring much better than the first.
8.0 7.1 1538 - 161

ZS Hybrid+ Trophy ★★★☆☆ 22.1.25
Roomier, cleverer and better-equipped than you would expect for the money.
7.6 6.6 1422 41.5 -

MINI

John Cooper Works
★★★★☆ 14.5.25
A proper hot hatch let down by a stiff ride and an impenetrable user interface.
5.8 4.5 1363 42.0 -

Countryman C Exclusive
★★★⯪☆ 17.4.24
Spacious but sends mixed messages on family-friendly refinement.
8.7 7.7 1618 46.9 -

Aceman SE Exclusive
★★★⯪☆ 8.1.25
Compact SUV has the usual Mini charm but limited extra grown-up appeal.
6.8 5.7 1756 3.1 162

MORGAN

Plus Four ★★★⯪☆ 12.8.20
Refreshing and fun in that true Morgan way but lacks a little polish.
5.1 4.3 1013 54.0 -

Plus Six ★★★★☆ 10.4.24
The individualist's sports car made better.
4.4 3.3 1188 37.2 -

Super 3 ★★★★⯪ 9.11.22
Adds some subtle modernity to the 3 Wheeler's endless giggles.
6.9 5.9 644 43.5 -

NISSAN

Juke 1.0 DIG-T 117 Tekna ★★★⯪☆ 29.1.20
Impressive in some respects but outstanding in few.
11.9 11.8 1256 46.0 -

Qashqai 1.3 DIG-T 158 Tekna
★★★★☆ 28.7.21
Ticks the important family car boxes but its powertrain frustrates.
10.0 9.3 1412 44.9 -

Ariya 87kWh Evolve ★★★⯪☆ 26.10.22
Surprisingly traditional and luxurious although not wholly successful.
8.2 6.4 2109 - -

X-Trail e-Power e-4orce AWD Tekna
★★★★☆ 22.2.23
Capable all-rounder that deals effortlessly with everyday life.
6.6 6.0 1947 33.8 -

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

OMODA

5 1.6 TGDI Comfort
★★⯪☆☆ 20.11.24
Chinese SUV has some promise as a purely rational buy but feels under-developed.
7.4 6.3 1474 38.2 -

PEUGEOT

e-208 Allure Premium
★★★★☆ 6.5.20
Stylish, drivable, usable, reasonably priced – and the best small EV
- - 1455 38.2 -

308 1.2T Puretech 130 GT ★★★★☆ 25.5.22
A reminder of the old Peugeot magic. Small, supple and a bit special.
9.5 9.2 1358 55.3 -

408 Hybrid 180 GT e-EAT8 ★★★★☆ 11.10.23
Novel Peugeot shows an alternative path for the family car.
8.2 7.3 1746 42.1 40

508 BlueHDi 180 S&S GT Auto
★★★★☆ 24.10.18
Stylish and likeable but lacking the polish of more premium rivals.
8.8 8.5 1671 52.0 -

508 SW Hybrid 225 S&S Allure e-EAT8
★★★★☆ 8.7.20
This is a comfortable car that looks smart and feels classy.
- - 1720 - -

508 SW Hybrid4 PSE ★★★★☆ 5.5.21
Hits notable handling highs but feels less than sharp elsewhere.
5.7 4.7 1892 44.0 -

TOP 3

BEST AFFORDABLE SPORTS CARS

1 Alpine A110

2 Porsche 718

3 Ariel Atom 4

SCAN THE CODE TO SEE THE TOP 10

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
e-2008 GT Line	★★★½☆	30.9.20	Cheaper versions impress; pricier ones won't worry class leaders.	9.5	8.9	1638	-	-
3008 1.6 BlueHDi 120 GT Line	★★★½☆	18.1.17	In challenging company, the 3008 promises more than it delivers.	12.0	12.1	1300	53.2	-
e-3008 73kWh Allure	★★★½☆	4.8.24	Electric family SUV is rich, handsome and refined but no technical tour de force.	8.5	7.1	2132	-	219
5008 Hybrid 136 GT	★★★☆☆	12.2.25	Concept car style can't save the function-follows-form engineering.	9.9	9.4	1736	44.0	-

POLESTAR

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
2 BST Edition 270	★★★½☆	12.4.23	A creditable attempt at electric car thrills, although not quite fully formed.	4.5	3.4	2161	-	188
3 Long Range Dual Motor Launch Edition	★★★★☆	12.2.25	Electric SUV is spacious, attractive and enticing to drive - with a few lapses.	4.6	3.8	2610	2.3	235

PORSCHE

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
718 Boxster	★★★★½	8.6.16	Better than ever objectively, but at the expense of vital subjective appeal.	5.4	4.3	1395	35.9	-
718 Cayman S	★★★★½	10.8.16	Still the greatest sports coupé out there, even if it doesn't sound like it.	4.8	3.9	1430	-	-
718 Spyder	★★★★½	1.4.20	Spyder's flat six rectifies most, if not quite all, of the 718's shortcomings.	4.3	3.5	1350	30.1	-
718 Cayman GT4 RS	★★★★★	14.9.22	A feast of noise, revs, handling poise and thrills. Incredibly special.	3.9	3.0	1444	27.1	-
911 GT3 PDK	★★★★½	11.8.21	Less versatile than some past GT3s but still spectacularly good.	3.4	2.7	1430	29.2	-
911 Turbo S	★★★★½	10.8.22	Has a questionable raison d'être but is engaging and awesomely capable.	2.5	2.0	1640	36.3	-
911 Carrera T	★★★★☆	30.8.23	Sharper 911 has a likeable simplicity but makes key compromises.	4.9	3.8	1456	39.1	-
911 GT3 RS	★★★★½	22.11.23	Esoteric even by hardcore 911 standards but simply monumental.	3.2	2.5	1476	26.7	-
911 Dakar	★★★★☆	10.1.24	Rally-raid-themed throwback charms like no other modern 911.	3.3	2.6	1660	36.0	-
911 S/T	★★★★★	3.7.24	Porsche's GT division alters its recipe to deliver an all-time great.	3.7	2.6	1408	30.9	-
911 Carrera GTS	★★★★½	5.3.25	Hybrid tech punts barnstorming Carrera into the supercar sphere.	2.8	2.6	1607	34.3	-
Macan Turbo	★★★★½	4.6.14	Luxury SUV meets sports car in a compact, well-priced package.	4.7	4.3	2050	30.9	-
Macan Turbo Electric	★★★½☆	19.2.25	Otherwise appealing EV is undone by chassis tech.	3.0	2.5	-	2.1	219
Cayenne S	★★★★½	21.2.24	Rebooted Cayenne impresses and the charming V8 is our pick.	5.0	4.3	2256	28.8	-
Cayenne Turbo	★★★★☆	5.9.18	As impressive as ever but not quite the driver's car it once was.	3.9	3.4	2307	31.5	-
Cayenne Turbo S E-Hybrid	★★★½☆	27.5.20	Technically impressive but fails to make a convincing case for itself.	-	-	2490	-	-
Cayenne Turbo GT Coupé	★★★★☆	20.7.22	Uncompromising rapid SUV is a bit of a monster – but a likeable one.	3.1	2.7	2251	26.1	-
Panamera 4 E-Hybrid	★★★★☆	22.1.25	Understated plug-in hybrid is a Swiss Army knife super-saloon.	3.8	2.4	2370	30.1	29
Taycan Turbo S	★★★★½	30.10.24	Porsche deftly keeps its superb EV on the boil.	2.6	1.9	2356	2.7	233

TOP 3

LONGEST-RANGE EVs

1 Mercedes-Benz EQS

2 Audi A6 E-tron

3 Polestar 3

SCAN THE
CODE TO SEE
THE TOP 10

RENAULT

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Clio TCe 100 Iconic	★★★★½	27.11.19	Plusher, smoother, more mature. A car of substance as well as style.	11.6	10.9	1138	56.9	-
5 E-Tech Comfort Range Iconic Five	★★★★½	12.3.25	Accomplished and well priced, the 5 changes the affordable EV game.	7.7	7.2	1461	3.1	166
Megane E-Tech Techno	★★★½☆	23.11.22	Likeable and eye-catching, but rivals have moved the EV game on.	6.9	5.4	1688	-	198
Captur TCe 130 S-Edition EDC	★★★½☆	18.3.20	Second-generation Captur should prove popular, but not with this powertrain.	9.4	9.2	1363	53.1	-
Arkana E-Tech Hybrid 145 S-Edition	★★★½☆	13.10.21	Eminently sensible but unspectacular.	11.0	10.1	1365	58.3	-
Scenic E-Tech Iconic Long Range	★★★★☆	26.6.24	The Scenic finally conforms but does so with style and substance.	8.1	6.3	1916	-	313
Austral E-Tech Iconic Esprit Alpine	★★★½☆	19.7.23	Clever hybrid and pleasant cabin but let down by clumsy dynamics.	8.5	6.9	1696	43.5	-

ROLLS-ROYCE

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Ghost Series II Black Badge	★★★★½	25.6.25	Only flirts with sporting appeal, and gives up no Rolls accomplishments in doing so.	4.5	3.6	2576	25.8	-
Phantom	★★★★★	4.4.18	The world's greatest and finest luxury car is now also the very best.	5.5	4.4	2780	28.4	-
Spectre	★★★★½	20.12.23	Superbly lavish and intoxicatingly refined, if shy of epoch-making.	4.1	3.1	2935	-	245
Cullinan Black Badge	★★★★☆	19.2.20	Far more likeable to drive than look at, for those who have a use for it.	4.9	4.2	2739	23.6	-

SEAT

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Ibiza 1.0 TSI SE Technology	★★★★½	19.7.17	Grown-up supermini shows its rivals how it's done – in most respects.	10.0	10.0	1047	55.6	-
Leon eHybrid FR	★★★½☆	2.12.20	Competent and efficient but verges on being forgettable to drive.	7.2	6.2	1558	46.3	26
Arona 1.0 TSI SE Technology	★★★★☆	15.11.17	Polished, mature all-rounder has since lost its class-best crown.	10.5	10.7	1149	40.9	-
Ateca 1.5 Eco TSI FR Black Edition DSG	★★★☆☆	25.10.23	Once-appealing Nissan Qashqai rival now shows some signs of neglect.	8.9	8.0	1396	44.4	-

SKODA

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Fabia 1.0 TSI 95PS SE Comfort	★★★★½	9.2.22	Comfy, spacious and good value, this supermini is Skoda at its best.	9.9	9.7	1117	58.7	-
Scala SE 1.5 TSI 150PS DSG	★★★½☆	31.7.19	Different from the bigger Octavia but perhaps not by enough.	7.9	7.3	1200	52.9	-
Octavia 2.0 TDI 150PS SE L First Edition Estate DSG	★★★★☆	2.9.20	Leads the charge to take Skoda upmarket and mostly succeeds.	8.4	8.7	1510	73.0	-
Octavia Estate vRS	★★★★☆	29.1.25	A fine estate made more engaging rather than a great hot hatch made a bit bigger.	5.9	4.8	-	37.6	-
Superb SE L 2.0 TDI 150PS Estate	★★★★★	17.7.24	The large, functional estate car modernised in all the right ways.	8.4	8.2	1673	68.7	-
Karoq 2.0 TDI 150PS Scout	★★★½☆	30.1.19	Practical, comfortable Skoda is short on charm and dynamic polish.	8.9	9.6	1629	47.1	-
Elroq 85 Edition	★★★★½	19.3.25	Comfortable, efficient, practical and intuitive; a well-rounded, class-topping EV.	6.1	5.0	2085	3.5	246
Enyaq iV 80 Lounge	★★★★☆	18.8.21	Practical, rangy, well priced. Hits a sweet spot in the EV market.	8.3	7.8	2098	-	262

SMART

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
#1 Premium	★★★½☆	8.11.23	Drivability frustrations mar an otherwise agreeable experience.	5.6	4.6	1861	-	229
#3 Premium	★★★½☆	15.5.24	Makings of an interesting alternative EV but let down by the finer details.	5.7	4.9	1832	-	205

SUBARU

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Crosstrek 2.0i e-Boxer Touring	★★★½☆	28.2.24	Improved manners for junior off-roader are welcome, if not transformative.	10.4	10.4	1620	45.3	-
Outback 2.5i Lineartronic Touring	★★★½☆	27.9.23	A pretty good answer to a question that only a few people asked.	9.3	8.7	1690	42.8	-
Solterra AWD Touring	★★★☆☆	15.3.23	A hint of Subaru-typical capability doesn't take this EV quite far enough.	6.7	6.2	2051	-	169

SUZUKI

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Across 2.5 PHEV E-Four CVT	★★★★½	7.4.21	Excellent hybrid powertrain makes it one of the best PHEVs around.	6.4	5.8	1966	44.4	48

TESLA

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Model 3 Standard Range Plus	★★★★☆	4.9.19	Wrinkles aside, it offers great electric performance and usability at this price.	5.8	4.7	1633	-	156

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Model 3 Long Range ★★★★☆ 14.2.24 Packs a real punch. Both updated Model 3s are fine propositions.	4.4	3.4	1846	-	277
Model Y Long Range AWD ★★★★☆ 23.3.22 A far better electric car than a premium SUV.	4.7	3.6	1978	-	234
Model S P90D ★★★★⯪ 20.4.16 Great EV, intriguing driver's car. Not quite the perfect luxury GT.	3.5	3.0	2220	-	214
Model S Plaid ★★★⯪☆ 2.8.23 Astonishing pace but not a fully rounded performance saloon.	2.4	1.7	2220	-	301
Model X 90D ★★★★☆ 15.2.17 High-rise EV strains under SUV brief but still feels like a history maker.	5.2	4.2	2508	-	147

TOYOTA

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Aygo X Limited Edition ★★★⯪☆ 11.5.22 A mostly very grown-up small car but also an expensive one.	15.6	16.5	974	58.7	-
Yaris 1.5 Hybrid Design ★★★★☆ 23.9.20 Grows not only in stature but also in ability and subjective appeal.	9.2	8.8	1140	65.0	-
GR Yaris Circuit Pack ★★★★★ 3.3.21 Toyota, on a roll with driver's cars, provides yet another winner.	5.2	5.0	1283	39.2	-
Corolla 2.0 Hybrid Design Touring Sports ★★★★☆ 5.6.19 A big step up for Toyota in a vital sector and a better hybrid to boot.	8.5	7.7	1537	52.6	-
Prius Plug-in Design ★★★★☆ 23.4.25 Better late than never for best Prius to date.	6.6	5.6	1542	56.1	46
bZ4X AWD Vision ★★★⯪☆ 18.1.23 A decent effort all round but not exceptional in any way.	6.4	5.9	2023	-	208
Land Cruiser 2.8 D-4D 204 Invincible ★★★★☆ 21.5.25 Remains supremely tough but now has added kerb appeal and drivability.	10.3	10.3	2503	30.7	-
Mirai Design Premium ★★★★☆ 16.6.21 Impressive hydrogen fuel cell car has made strides but remains hamstrung overall.	8.7	8.3	1937	-	-
GR Supra Pro ★★★★☆ 14.8.19 Fast, usable and has plenty going for it but leaves us wanting more.	4.4	3.6	1495	39.0	-
Hilux 2.8 D-4D GR Sport ★★★⯪☆ 1.3.23 Gazoo-branded Ford Ranger Raptor rival is formidable but lacks fun factor.	10.0	9.5	2241	32.5	-

VAUXHALL

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Corsa 1.2 Turbo 100PS Ultimate Nav Auto ★★★⯪☆ 22.1.20 Supermini is improved in many ways but lacks the appeal to match its price.	11.2	11.5	1171	51.8	-
Astra 1.2 Turbo 130PS GS Line ★★★⯪☆ 5.10.22 Family hatchback's gentle push upmarket is only a qualified success.	9.9	9.2	1304	55.3	-
Crossland X 1.2 Turbo 130PS Elite ★★★☆☆ 7.6.17 Typically practical and well priced, but Vauxhall can do better.	9.8	10.3	1278	54.2	-
Mokka 1.2 Turbo 130PS Elite Nav Premium Auto ★★★⯪☆ 12.5.21 The driving experience sells a brave design effort just a little short.	9.3	9.1	1238	48.6	-
Grandland X Hybrid4 Ultimate Nav ★★★☆☆ 22.4.20 Inspires big expectations and delivers few, but it's an interesting fleet option.	-	-	1800	-	-
Combo Life 1.5 Turbo D 100PS Energy ★★★⯪☆ 27.12.18 Usable, spacious and practical, if not very pretty to look at.	14.7	16.2	1552	60.1	-

VOLKSWAGEN

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Polo 1.0 TSI 95PS SE ★★★★⯪ 31.1.18 Brings 'big car' space, class, kit and finish to this class like never before.	10.7	11.2	1145	57.1	-
Polo 2.0 TSI GTI+ ★★★★☆ 1.8.18 A usable, quick and vastly competent effort but not the most thrilling.	6.7	5.9	1342	46.8	-
Golf 1.5 eTSI 150PS Style DSG ★★★★⯪ 22.7.20 Additional strengths and familiar ones carry it back to the class lead.	8.3	7.8	1330	60.0	-
Golf 1.5 TSI eHybrid Style ★★★★⯪ 23.10.24 New plug-in Golf takes the PHEV hatchback's status to greater heights.	7.2	6.1	1619	46.5	-
Golf GTI ★★★⯪☆ 25.9.24 'Mk8.5' version of hot hatchback is slick and effective but not a big enough step forward.	5.3	4.4	-	47.2	-
Golf R ★★★★☆ 14.4.21 Most entertaining distillation of the Golf R formula yet – for a price.	4.4	3.7	1520	43.9	-
ID 3 Pro Performance Life ★★★★☆ 31.3.21 Bland but with the substance to further the zero-emissions push.	7.0	6.5	1757	-	145
Arteon 2.0 BiTDI 240PS 4Motion R-Line ★★★⯪☆ 27.9.17 Considered approach produces an executive flagship short on sparkle.	6.5	6.2	1866	55.6	-
Arteon eHybrid Elegance Shooting Brake ★★★⯪☆ 9.6.21 Striking PHEV appears radical but upholds Volkswagen's traditions at heart.	7.1	6.0	1783	52.5	-
ID 7 Pro Match ★★★★⯪ 13.3.24 Volkswagen finds some electric form in an unexpected format.	6.1	5.1	2162	-	239
T-Roc 2.0 TSI 190PS 4Motion SEL DSG ★★★★⯪ 24.1.18 Shows performance verve, dynamic completeness and stylish swagger.	6.7	6.5	1534	37.5	-
T-Roc 1.5 TSI Evo R-Line Cabriolet DSG ★★⯪☆☆ 10.6.20 It brings little worth having to the compact cabriolet niche.	-	-	1540	-	-
Tiguan 1.5 eTSI 150PS R-Line ★★★⯪☆ 22.5.24 Functional and mature, but this isn't the engine or trim we would go for.	9.4	9.2	1606	44.9	-
ID 4 GTX Max ★★★⯪☆ 27.10.21 GTX adds flavour to ID 4 but doesn't reimagine 'GTI' for the EV age.	6.2	5.6	2220	-	200
Touareg 3.0 TDI 4Motion R-Line Tech ★★★⯪☆ 8.8.18 An inoffensive if forgettable bid at a luxury market breakthrough.	7.2	6.6	2292	41.6	-
Touareg 3.0 TSI eHybrid 4Motion Elegance ★★★⯪☆ 5.6.24 It's versatile and likeably unpretentious but won't be a default company car choice.	6.2	5.7	2446	34.1	26
Touran 2.0 TDI 150PS SE Family DSG ★★★★☆ 3.2.16 A spacious, refined and classy all-rounder – albeit a slightly bland one.	9.9	9.7	1666	-	-
Multivan 1.4 eHybrid Style ★★★★☆ 8.3.23 Latest Volkswagen 'bus combines the best bits of both car and van.	8.4	7.1	2243	37.9	14
ID Buzz 77kWh Style Pro ★★★★☆ 8.2.23 It costs plenty but offers versatility and luxury accomplishments.	9.5	9.1	2498	-	185
Grand California 600 ★★★⯪☆ 2.1.20 Grandest California is classy but not half as clever as its smaller namesake.	15.8	16.7	3095	28.5	-
Transporter Sportline Black Edition Kombi SWB ★★★☆☆ 30.3.22 Not compromised but hardly enhanced by its sporting agenda.	9.1	9.0	2108	39.1	-
Passat eHybrid 204PS Elegance ★★★★☆ 13.11.24 Rounded and with good PHEV credentials, but less compelling than its sibling car.	7.2	6.4	1836	44.5	73

VOLVO

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
EX30 Single Motor Extended Range Plus ★★★☆☆ 1.5.24 Not enough key strengths – and not enough Volvo pragmatism.	5.7	5.1	1779	-	179
C40 Recharge Twin Ultimate ★★★⯪☆ 13.4.22 A transitional model for Volvo that doesn't go quite far enough.	4.4	3.6	2172	-	194
XC40 D4 AWD First Edition ★★★★⯪ 7.2.18 Wieldy, classy and simple. As good as its bigger siblings, if not better.	8.5	8.5	1735	43.8	-
XC60 D4 AWD R-Design ★★★⯪☆ 5.7.17 The right product at the right time but lacking the right dynamic finish.	8.9	8.9	1836	48.9	-
XC90 B5 AWD Ultra Bright ★★★⯪☆ 2.7.25 Still a mature, versatile and wilfully unspectacular choice.	8.0	7.5	2117	37.0	-
V60 D4 Momentum Pro Auto ★★★★☆ 27.6.18 Fine-looking, capable and practical estate with only a few demerits.	8.9	8.3	1669	43.1	-
V60 T6 Recharge AWD R-Design ★★★★⯪ 21.9.22 Strong hybrid system gives ageing Volvo a lot of fresh appeal.	4.9	4.3	2036	38.0	51
V90 T6 Recharge AWD R-Design ★★★★⯪ 11.11.20 Hardly revolutionary but exceptionally appealing nonetheless.	5.6	4.9	2109	41.9	-

XPENG

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
G6 RWD Standard Range ★★★⯪☆ 26.2.25 Chinese electric SUV lacks inspiration but has plenty of rational appeal.	6.8	6.2	2067	3.3	208

WHAT'S COMING WHEN

Volvo ES90 November

This sleeker, lower-slung saloon sibling to the EX90 is conceived as a rival to the likes of BMW's i5.

Honda Prelude December

Rakish Civic-based two-door promises fun dynamics and intriguing simulated gearshifts.

Toyota Urban Cruiser December

Toyota's new EV crossover is really a Suzuki in disguise.

SCAN THE CODE FOR THE FULL LIST

Why I love...
MORGAN

BY JACK HARRISON

Owners enjoy a timeless driving experience and the adulation of fellow road users

Driving a performance car in the real world can make you feel like public enemy number one.

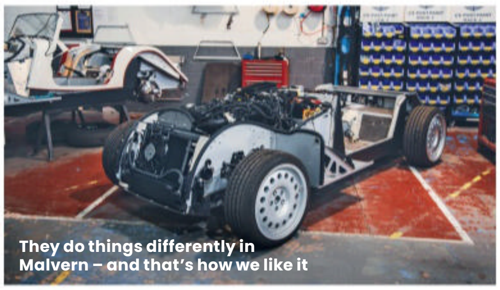
Maybe it's the overly aggressive styling of most modern driver's cars, or perhaps it's simply jealousy. But try pulling out of a busy junction in something with a fruity exhaust and a sub-4.0sec 0-62mph time, and settle in for the wait as your fellow motorists whizz wilfully by, glaring at you like you've just suggested demolishing their house to make way for a McDonald's drive-through.

Conversely, try the same move in a 1950s MG A and you'll be treated like a hero. People love classics. However, it's incredibly easy to forget just how much automotive technology has evolved in the past 70 years until you have to deal with beam axles and carburettors.

So how do you blend exhilarating modern performance with cheerful, crowd-pleasing vibes? Simple: you buy a Morgan. I've never been treated better on the road than I have behind the wheel of one of Malvern's hand-crafted roadsters, and even if I had been sneered at, I'd be having too much fun to care.

Operating since 1910 as a successful purveyor of thrummy three-wheelers, Morgan built its first four-wheeled car in 1935 and introduced the Plus 4 in 1952 – and then stayed firmly in its lane. The Plus 8 came about in 1968 with Rover's legendary V8 up front, but otherwise this was a firm that steered clear of all-out revolution.

Nonetheless, the orders kept coming in (there were 10-year waits at one point), and in 2000 the Aero 8 was launched alongside the classic Plus models and the V6 Roadster as the first all-new Morgan in 32 years. The looks were divisive, but it's what was under the skin that made this car so special. A bonded aluminium chassis cradled a current-spec 4.4-litre BMW V8, while rose-jointed suspension and double wishbones all around meant the chassis was a world away from the somewhat cart-esque architectures of yore. It was truly modern, but still with a traditional ash wood body frame as a nod to the past.



They do things differently in Malvern – and that's how we like it

> **"Morgan is King of Cool in the car world at the moment"**

Morgan was on a roll by 2012. If you weren't a fan of the Aero 8's gorgeous art deco styling, you could have a Plus 8 instead – near enough the same car but with a body that looked like it left the factory in 1956. The 3 Wheeler was brought back to life too, with a thrummy V-twin bursting out of the body between the front wheels.

And today's Morgan line-up is more diverse and characterful than ever before: the laugh-a-minute Super 3 opens the range with a Ford petrol triple and unique styling; the Plus Four continues as a faithful but usefully modernised evolution of the 1950s original; and the new Supersport has landed as a six-figure GT with real Porsche-baiting credentials.

Visit the factory and not only will you find cars being beautifully hand-built in a similar way to 100 years ago, but you will also find buzzing engineering and design teams with a slickness and community spirit that's firmly at odds with the firm's former 'old man' image.

It's a company that recognises the importance of keeping key skills going while appealing to the next generation. To me, Morgan is the King of Cool in the car world at the moment – and the jaw-dropping Midsummer special edition, created in partnership with legendary design house Pininfarina and launched last year, is a further illustration of that.

It's hard not to crack a grin when you're behind the wheel of a Morgan, and there's something special about knowing that other people are doing the same just watching you drive past.

What we did this week

TRAIN BIEN

I recently travelled by Eurostar – specifically one of the older models: a Class 373 (to ceux qui connaissent leurs oignons). It's a train, of course, but I think well worthy of the same reverence we bestow upon legendary cars. It's a beguiling, beautiful, bug-splattered testament to British-French collaboration. Much like the tunnel it passes through, or Concorde – or when Ryton built the Peugeot 206. **JONATHAN BRYCE**

ARCH NEMESIS

My gleeful arrival at Caffeine & Machine last weekend was slightly marred by a loud scraping sound coming from the front end of my Renault Clio Trophy. I glanced underneath to find the front arch lining had cracked and part of it was dragging on the ground. I managed to bodge it back together with cable ties, but if anyone has a spare liner lying around, do get in touch… **SAM PHILLIPS**

CANNY LAD

Business secretary Jonathan Reynolds compared himself to footballer and fellow Mackem Jordan Henderson at the SMMT Summit last week. "The government's job is never to be the star striker," he told the assembled industry execs. Like Hendo, he's happier "dictating the pace of play, protecting the back line, making the passes forward to give businesses the best opportunity to put the ball into the net." Lost on me, but the audience seemed to approve. **FELIX PAGE**

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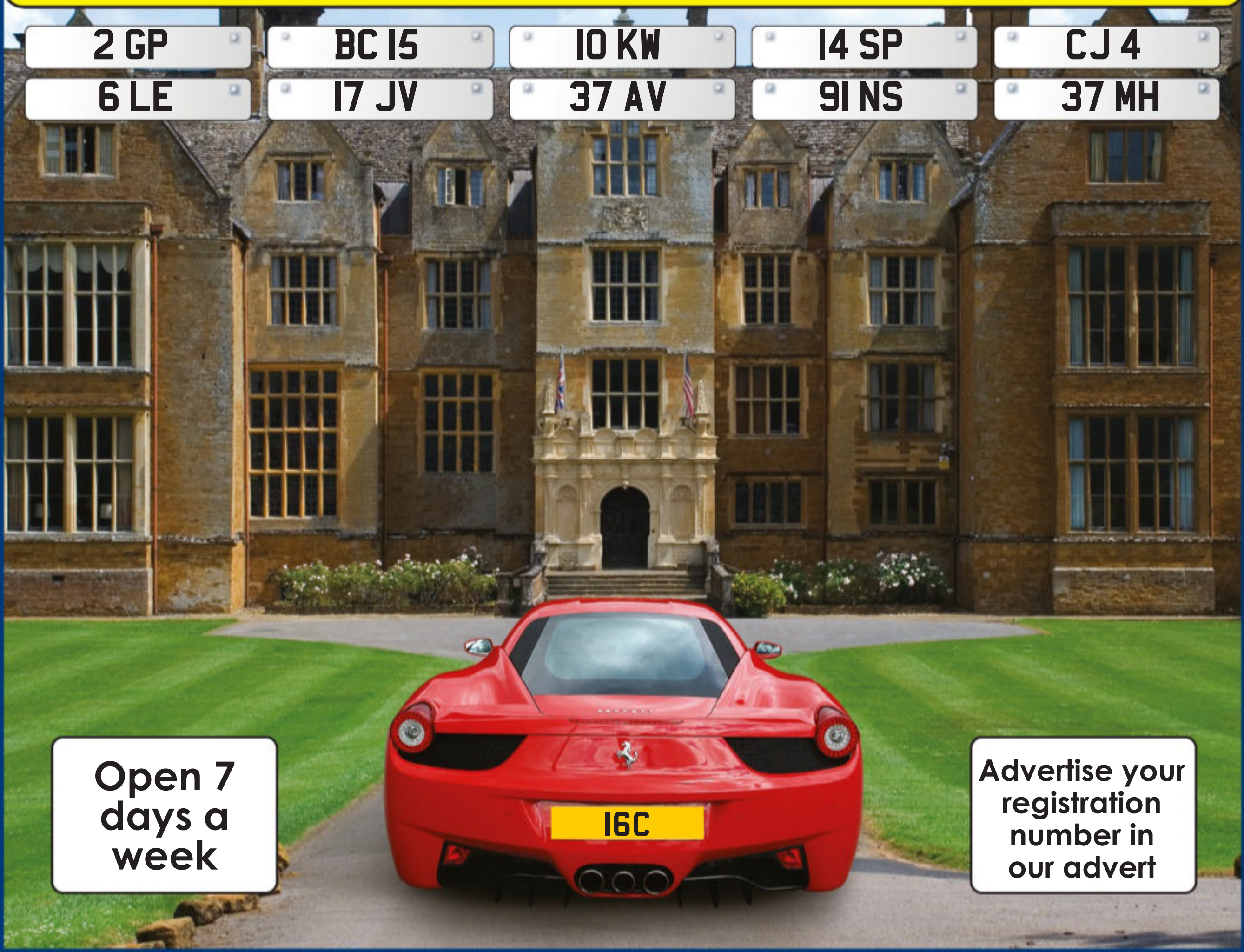
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Official fuel consumption for the SEAT Leon Estate range mpg (litres/100km) combined: 48.7 (5.8) – 706.2 (0.4). Combined CO_2 emissions 132 – 8 (g/km). Figures for the SEAT Leon Estate range, including petrol/diesel and hybrid vehicles. Figures for hybrid vehicles were obtained using a combination of battery power and fuel. Figures shown are for comparability purposes; only compare fuel consumption, CO_2 and electric range figures with other vehicles tested to the same technical procedures. These figures may not reflect real life driving results, which will depend upon a number of factors including the accessories fitted (post-registration), variations in weather, driving styles and vehicle load. Data correct at 06/2025.